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General Assembly

Seventy-third session

Official Records

13th plenary meeting
Friday, 28 September 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. . . . . (Ecuador)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Ke (Cambodia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Timothy S. Harris, Prime Minister and Minister for Sustainable Development, National Security, People Empowerment and Constituency Empowerment of Saint Kitts and Nevis

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Sustainable Development, National Security, People Empowerment and Constituency Empowerment of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Timothy S. Harris, Prime Minister and Minister for Sustainable Development, National Security, People Empowerment and Constituency Empowerment of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Timothy S. Harris, Prime Minister and Minister for Sustainable Development, National Security, People Empowerment and Constituency Empowerment of Saint Kitts and Nevis, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Harris (Saint Kitts and Nevis): It is my privilege and honour once again to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis. At the outset, allow me to congratulate the President on her election to lead this body at this most significant time and as the first woman to assume the post from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. I assure her of my country's fullest support during her tenure.

During the opening days of this session of the General Assembly we paid tribute to the late former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, whom we remember dearly, and what he said about the United Nations, namely, that it was critical in the international community's efforts to solve the wide range of global problems. Multilateralism, with the United Nations system at its fulcrum, has long informed our global engagements. The United Nations has been, is and will continue to be critical to global peace, progress and prosperity. That is why there is a need to move urgently to reform the United Nations, making it more responsive to the needs and concerns of all, in particular small island developing States (SIDS).

The United Nations has become too preoccupied with summitry, that is, with specialized high-level meetings and declarations, and less focused on delivery. The lack of cooperation among Member States stymies the forward march of humankind. A reformed United Nations must become a body of greater action and fewer words. We need urgent action on climate change, non-communicable diseases, global cooperation, peace, prosperity and the reordering of the international financial system. Guided by this year's theme, "Making the United Nations relevant to all

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people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", my delegation is of the view that those ideas can enable us to address the unfairness and inequity of the international development order, and we urge a new and more inclusive paradigm of equitable and sustainable development.

Although it is the smallest country in the western hemisphere, my country has always had its own goals, since long before the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals were announced. More than a week ago, we celebrated 35 years of independence. We have made significant progress towards alleviating poverty, providing free primary and secondary education, ensuring access to affordable health care and enhancing the standard of living for our citizens and residents.

All those gains could be erased by the phenomenon of climate change. The damage sustained last year by the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States subregion as a result of Hurricanes Irma and Maria was unimaginable. The high-level pledging conference in the aftermath of those hurricanes was an attempt to chart the way forward towards creating resilience and better recovery. We ask that Member States with commitments still outstanding fulfil them as soon as practicable. We applaud those countries that have redeemed their pledges. There is still a great deal to be done to restore affected Member States, but that requires strong, meaningful and enduring international partnerships.

We continue to highlight, on the one hand, our inherent vulnerabilities to natural disasters and, on the other hand, an unflinching determination to maintain a sustainable society. Our responsibility is clear. Individually and collectively, we must commit to reducing the amount of harmful materials that we emit into the environment. It is a matter of great concern that nations such as my own continue to pay dearly for a problem that we did not create. Our people see the impact of climate change on their lives and livelihoods. Climate change is largely the consequence of the actions of the more developed countries, their carbon emissions and harmful lifestyles, yet SIDS pay an unfair price — a price so high that, for many of us, climate change presents an existential threat.

In that connection, how will the United Nations assist our region with the growing prevalence of the sargassum seaweed that has adversely impacted the Caribbean area and is thought to be a noxious side effect of global warming? Sargassum affects our marine environment, in particular our coastal fisheries, and has affected the revenues of the fisherfolk in the region. Hotels, beaches and other tourism-related activities have also been severely impacted. It is my fervent hope that my plea today for international intervention will bring some relief to the people of our region. We must hold countries accountable for the environmental degradation that they cause not only in their own jurisdictions but also in other States. The United Nations system presents the best vehicle to do that.

We welcome the funding mechanisms established to assist countries, particularly highly vulnerable SIDS. However, the process must be transparent, easily accessible and, most importantly, the commitments of donor countries must bear fruit. That said, the international community cannot on the one hand claim to be helping SIDS, while at the same time classifying us as middle- and high-income countries based on archaic financial models that ultimately deny access to critical developmental assistance and hinder investment financing. We reiterate our calls for the international community to address with urgency the sterile measure of per capita income now employed. It is equally important to address the issues of disaster-risk insurance and recognition of the unique vulnerabilities of small States. My country remains committed to the Sustainable Development Goals and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway.

The developmental efforts of small States are also being thwarted by an unfair financial architecture, which includes the threat of de-risking and the loss of correspondent banking relationships. That is compounded by the very discriminatory and irrational blacklisting of countries that are forced to divert scarce resources to address the onerous and arbitrary demands of the European Union's Code of Conduct Group for business taxation and other entities created by large, highly developed countries. It is completely unfair to subject some countries to such evaluation and ever-fluctuating standards, while others are exempt.

The threats to the survival of small States are real. I therefore call on this body to bring the plight of small States like Saint Kitts and Nevis to the forefront of international discourse and to bring an end to the discriminatory policies that I have mentioned. At great

cost, my country and other small States seek to rise to the challenges posed by the unfair international financial architecture. However, the frequency and arbitrariness of those unilateral demands derail essential development efforts in small States. I submit to this body that we deserve and have a right to expect fairness, transparency and consistency in the treatment of all States. A clear, rules-based financial system that applies to all States must be our collective goal.

My Government is mindful that without peace, there can be no shared prosperity. We have aggressively confronted the problem of crime and violence on several fronts. We condemn all acts of violence and support efforts to maintain peace. My Government will use every resource available to achieve a stable, peaceful and equitable society, which is what our people expect and certainly deserve. Saint Kitts and Nevis supports the calls for diplomacy aimed at addressing the conflicts around the world and is particularly heartened by the welcome dialogue on the Korean peninsula. The Caribbean is a zone of peace, and our clear philosophy is to promote peace, friendship and dialogue while avoiding conflict with other territories. In that regard, a denuclearized world is a most desirable objective for all humankind.

Throughout the Caribbean, we suffer from an increase in crime connected to the trade in small arms, light weapons and drugs. Those weapons flow into the Caribbean, where they are not manufactured, and are linked to an insatiable drug appetite in the West. It is beyond our power to unilaterally control the flow of guns into the region or the addiction that drives the dangerous global drug trade. We seek the assistance of the international community as we work tirelessly to address that scourge. My country remains fully committed to the Arms Trade Treaty. Our increasing internal budget allocations are an indication of our commitment to the maintenance of safety and security.

Saint Kitts and Nevis is delighted that this week, this body joined in committing to scaling up multi-stakeholder and multisectoral responses aimed at the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Our region remains encumbered by the unfortunate burden that the NCDs have placed on our society and economy. The statistics are stark and startling. Eight of every 10 deaths in the Caribbean are attributable to NCDs, 40 per cent of which are premature and 70 per cent of that number are preventable. Hypertension is our leading risk factor for death. The Caribbean region's diabetes rate is double the global rate. We are facing an NCD crisis in our region. In that regard, we applaud the launch earlier this week of the Defeat-NCD Partnership, and the Caribbean Community and the Caribbean Public Health Agency will provide the fullest support to that new partnership.

We endorse a holistic approach to health, and I am happy to report that we have moved into high gear to make universal health coverage, which is an essential component of global health, a reality for all citizens in Saint Kitts and Nevis. However, I must remind the Assembly that NCDs and climate change are two sides of the same coin. They are symptoms of the failure of the current development paradigm.

My Government believes in making an equitable society a reality for all citizens in Saint Kitts and Nevis. In keeping with our commitment to transform our world through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we have endeavoured to create an equitable pathway by improving the standard of living of the most vulnerable so that they can become self-sufficient and productive citizens and residents.

I cannot address this great body without recognizing our dear friend, Taiwan. My Government views the United Nations as an organization for all people, including the people of Taiwan. We strongly believe that Taiwan has an important and continuing role to play in international development strategies, as it has achieved great success in technology, agriculture, health and renewable energy. We advocate that Taiwan be given space to add to the dialogue, progress and well-being of the global community. We also continue to voice our support for our Caribbean sister, Cuba, and call for the normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States of America in order to alleviate the real suffering caused to the Cuban people by the policy of exclusion. My country is conscious of the current difficulties in Venezuela. Venezuela has been a very good friend to the Caribbean, and Saint Kitts and Nevis continues to call for peaceful dialogue aimed at resolving the issues in that country, with due regard to the rule of law and the democratic ideals that we hold dear.

As I conclude, I must remind the Assembly that our people want action. They want results. We need to see all global leaders come together to create and maintain stability, equality and peace in our countries so that

our collective contributions can prevent and avoid war and violence, end the proliferation of nuclear weapons, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create a level playing field, enabling small States to thrive. May we be always mindful and proactive so as to ensure that no country is left behind in the pursuit and achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

It is our shared responsibility to create the best opportunities and fulfil the expectations of our current and future generations. I am convinced that if we continue to work steadfastly, while always remaining vigilant and focused on the overarching goals, we will contribute to a more relevant, fair, productive and meaningful United Nations and, by extension, a better world for all our peoples.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Sustainable Development, National Security, People Empowerment and Constituency Empowerment of Saint Kitts and Nevis for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Timothy S. Harris, Prime Minister and Minister for Sustainable Development, National Security, People Empowerment and Constituency Empowerment of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Hubert Alexander Minnis, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Mr. Hubert Alexander Minnis, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Hubert Alexander Minnis, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Minnis (Bahamas): I congratulate the President on her election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I wish to assure her and members of the Assembly of my delegation's support. I commend Secretary-General António Guterres, who continues to guide the Organization through a process of reform that is vital for the continued relevance of our Organization. I also pay tribute to the late Kofi Annan for the immense contribution he made to the United Nations and the global community.

This year, as we mark the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War, it is fitting that the theme for this seventy-third session is "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies". One of the painful lessons learned from the two world wars was the necessity for nations to work together to minimize conflicts and promote economic and social development. The relevance of the United Nations to the global community is without question. That is not to say that we ought not to strive to achieve more — it is imperative that we do.

As nations, we must intensify our deliberations and commitments to addressing climate change. Climate change is a clear and present danger to us all, but in particular to low-lying coastal nations like the Bahamas. We see that in the rising sea levels, the loss of coral reefs and the increased volume of acid in our oceans, as well as the more severe and frequent hurricanes and typhoons. This time last year, the Bahamas, along with many countries in the Caribbean and parts of the United States of America, faced the onslaught of hurricanes of category 4 or higher. As Hurricane Irma hurtled towards the Bahamas, my Government took the difficult decision to evacuate residents from the southern islands in order to prevent injury and the loss of life. We fortunately escaped without loss of life, but our southern neighbours were not as fortunate. As such, I fully support the Secretary-General's plan to call a climate summit next September to mobilize action and financial support.

As part of such discussions, we must dedicate considerably more energy and resources to building the resilience and sustainability of our island and coastal nations. Like our neighbours, the Bahamas is trying to rebuild its islands. However, the accumulated damage of a series of major hurricanes has made that very difficult. As an archipelago of many islands stretching approximately 600 miles from north to south, we are required to replicate infrastructure many times over with already limited resources.

While the delivery of humanitarian aid is essential, it is equally important to focus on prevention and the strengthening of capacity-building. Such a focus must be grounded in a comprehensive approach to sustainable

development that addresses, in an integrated manner, the range of issues that are critical to the Bahamas, from disaster-risk reduction to the sustainable use of the world's seas and oceans, in order to ensure their viability for generations to come. Tourism is the world's largest industry. It is also the lifeblood of the Bahamian economy. Millions of tourists travel to the Bahamas annually because of our beautiful turquoise waters and biodiversity. In that context, the Bahamas has committed to banning single-use plastics by 2020.

The Bahamas looks forward to the successful outcomes of the review of the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway, the international framework that seeks to advance those and other sustainable development priorities for small island developing States. The Bahamas will also advocate for a strong outcome at the intergovernmental conference on an international, legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Earlier this week, I participated in the Bloomberg round table on building resilient economies and preserving marine ecosystems in coastal Commonwealth nations. I commend such dialogues. However, I must stress that the Bahamas and our neighbours are being punished twice for circumstances that are not of our own making. It is not our island nations that are primarily responsible for the climate change that has resulted in the recent scourges of hurricanes and other natural disasters that ravage our islands. However, when we respond to national needs by borrowing internationally, seeking to restore basic human infrastructure, our debt to gross domestic product ratio rises, risking the possibility of a rating downgrade. That limits our ability to provide for ourselves, but we are burdened with a price tag too heavy to be borne.

A relevant United Nations should urgently facilitate a meaningful dialogue on the international stage to establish a workable solution. Furthermore, the adverse impact of global financial inequity is seen in the use of the distorted matrix of the per capita gross domestic product as a measure of national wealth and viability. That is done without due regard being given to a country's vulnerabilities and the weight that should be accorded to local circumstances. We remain concerned and disappointed that the application of that matrix causes the Bahamas to be assessed as being economically stronger than the threshold level for contributions from international financial organizations and for receiving grants and international assistance when disasters strike. The United Nations must devote greater focus and action to that inequitable issue.

We also reaffirm our support for Cuba's ability to access resources for development to rebuild after disasters. Similarly, notwithstanding the strong and unwavering commitment to the integrity of our financial-services industry, the Bahamas, like other jurisdictions, is fighting an uphill battle to avoid being blacklisted as a non-cooperative jurisdiction for tax purposes. The goalposts for cooperation are constantly being moved. They are being inequitably applied with unfair advantages to some and disadvantages to others. The Bahamas remains committed to international tax transparency and cooperation, the exchange of information and international regulatory standards, as well as to conducting business in a fair, transparent and competitive manner.

The Bahamas comprehensively seeks to provide greater opportunities to our disadvantaged urban centres through revitalization, economic empowerment and poverty-alleviation initiatives. Those initiatives have been designed to be consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). My Government is committed to achieving the SDGs and will continue to work with the United Nations and our other international partners and domestic stakeholders towards their implementation.

The Bahamas is dedicated to serving as a productive presence and committed member of the Council of the International Maritime Organization. We have presented our candidature for re-election in category C in the 2019 elections. The Bahamas intends to continue its efforts to make positive and innovative contributions towards ensuring the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine pollution by maritime vessels.

The Bahamas remains committed to the protection and promotion of human rights and gender equality. The geographical location of the Bahamas has made us particularly vulnerable to illegal migration. We have been embattled by that problem for decades. However, we are firmly resolved to fight illegal migration and to do so in a manner that prioritizes the safety and security of the Bahamas, while adhering to human rights principles. The Bahamas is committed to the use of information communication technology to

support development. We have offered ourselves as the smart choice with our candidature for the Council of the International Telecommunication Union. The Bahamas has been endorsed by our Caribbean Community neighbours.

The world continues to make progress in myriad areas of economic, political and social development. But progress requires the eternal vigilance of each generation, a recommitment to upholding the dignity and equality of all people and unrelenting international cooperation. I wish to reaffirm the commitment of the Bahamas to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hubert Alexander Minnis, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcome His Excellency Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Thabane (Lesotho): Allow me at the outset to sincerely congratulate the President on her well-deserved election as the fourth woman to ascend to the highest seat at the United Nations. Although we are happy about her election, we can certainly take no pride in our own record as leaders. Out of 73 Presidents of General Assembly sessions to date, only four have been women. Nevertheless, all is not lost. We must resolve to walk the talk and ensure that women get the same opportunities as men, in line with the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations.

I assure the President of my delegation's full support. Her impeccable credentials and experience spanning more than two decades in the multilateral setting assure us of a successful seventy-third session. It would be remiss of me not to commend her predecessor, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, for his noteworthy leadership during the previous session. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the work of the Organization (A/73/1), which outlines the state of our United Nations.

World history has been replete, since time immemorial, with periods when peace was lacking. It speaks of conflict among brothers and sisters — wars between and within nations. Terrorism and violence have disrupted and displaced families, while economic devastation has ruined countless lives. Natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods and tornadoes caused by climate change have taken their toll on humankind. Injustice continues to permeate countries, and societies are left devoid of hope for a prosperous, free, peaceful and just world. As new wars and civil unrest seem to be flaring up every week, our people look to us as their leaders for solutions, and they yearn for help from the United Nations.

It is in that context that we welcome the theme for this session — "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies". The theme speaks to the very principles underpinning the formation of the Organization. The Charter of the United Nations puts people at the centre of the United Nations with the following words in its Preamble: "We the peoples of the United Nations". The big question today is: have we put the people at the centre of our efforts as an Organization for more than seven decades?

As the session of 51 representatives who came from across the world to adopt the Charter of the United Nations in 1945 was drawing to a close, the then President of the United States, Harry Truman, said:

> "The Charter of the United Nations which you have just signed is a solid structure upon which we can build a better world. ... Between the victory in Europe and the final victory, in this most destructive of all wars, you have won a victory against war itself. ... With this Charter the world can begin to look forward to the time when all worthy human beings may be permitted to live decently as free people." (*Proceedings of the United Nations Conference on International Organization, final plenary session, San Francisco, 1945*)

For the past 73 years now, we have been standing at this rostrum making commitments and inspiring hope among the citizens of the world. However, our rhetoric has not been matched with action. Our lack of fidelity to the principles enshrined in the Charter remains a concern. Seven decades on, we are still embroiled in vicious conflict and violence. The world envisioned by our forebears, where "worthy human beings may be permitted to live decently as free people" (*ibid.*), continues to elude us. The multilateral system seems to provide no sustainable solution to the multifaceted challenges that confront our world, while unilateralism is on the rise. Those challenges put to the test the trust that humanity has put in the United Nations. Their hope that future generations will be saved from the scourge of war, which, as stated in the Preamble to the Charter, has twice in our lifetime brought untold sorrow to mankind, is further receding from sight.

The above scenario is a reality. Even so, the centrality and relevance of the United Nations cannot be challenged. The world would not have been the same without the United Nations. Imperfect as it is, its positive impact on the lives of countless people is a fact that cannot be denied. From feeding more than 104 million people in over 80 countries every year to assisting millions of refugees and protecting women and children, fighting against poverty, HIV and AIDS, and restoring calm through peacekeeping initiatives, the United Nations has undoubtedly made a difference in the lives of global citizens.

When addressing the General Assembly at its seventy-second session (see A/72/PV.17), I did so with a heavy heart, as there was a dark cloud of instability and insecurity hovering over my country. But today, I stand before the Assembly to attest to the difference that the United Nations can make in people's lives. With the help of the United Nations, the Southern African Development Community, the African Union and other development partners, we are on the path to changing the trajectory of a vicious circle of instability and volatile insecurity in Lesotho. The Kingdom of Lesotho is now embarking on a comprehensive national reform agenda that will culminate in the calibration of pivotal elements of Government, and thus achieve the tenets of the National Vision 2020. Our shared commitment as a nation to transforming our mountain kingdom into a just, prosperous and stable country, marked by effective and people-focused institutions, national unity of purpose, the rule of law, good governance and human rights, will certainly be attained.

Our resolve to build a safe, stable and secure country is motivated by the fact that peace and security are preconditions for development. We are determined to take charge of our socioeconomic transformation as a country, in line with the African Union Agenda 2063, as well as the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — premised upon the principle of inclusivity and leaving no one behind. We note, however, the important role that financing plays in any attempt to achieve the goals enshrined in both Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda. While we acknowledge that official development assistance remains a catalyst for development, we also advocate for robust domestic resource mobilization. We are determined to combat illicit financial flows, strengthen tax administration and harness remittances.

In line with our national priorities, we are taking substantive steps towards providing an appropriate space for private-sector investment and entrepreneurship as a complement to public investments. An industrial hub has been launched in the northern region. When fully operational, it will create job opportunities for more than 14,000 people. Private property investors will also be invited to build factory shells there.

We also cannot ignore the disturbing issue of migration. We all know that the movement of persons across borders is an issue of staggering importance. It is our view that migration is one area where opportunities for skilled and surplus labour can be explored. To that end, my Government is working closely with international partners to explore development outcomes related to migration. In addition, a national consultative committee was set up to deal with a range of migration-related matters, such as the development of a strategic plan on migration and development. Included in the plan are interventions aimed at enhancing the proper utilization of remittances from the diaspora. We therefore need to embrace migrants at the global level for their contribution to the economic development of both their countries of origin and their host countries. We find it disturbing that migrants all over the world continue to face challenges of unprecedented magnitude. We call upon all parties concerned to adhere to the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, and we look forward to the adoption of the compact in December.

Peace and prosperity cannot be achieved when women and girls are marginalized and not given the opportunity to contribute to development. The role of women and other disadvantaged sectors of our communities in advancing the global development agenda must be further enhanced. It is equally important to underline that the protection of human rights is a noble objective of the international community that must not be politicized, redefined or even subjected to double standards according to the whims and caprices of a few powerful States pursuing their own agendas.

Today on the African continent we are more determined than ever to rid ourselves of conflict by settling disputes through peaceful means. The warring parties in South Sudan have finally brokered a peace deal. The developments in the Horn of Africa offer hope for a prosperous and peaceful region. In particular, the normalization of relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea through the signing of a peace deal and the opening of embassies in both countries' capitals will usher in a new era of peace, with substantial concomitant economic, humanitarian and strategic implications for the region.

We continue to be saddened, however, by the situation in Western Sahara, which continues to be the only colony on the African continent. The suffering of the Sahrawi people has been going on for far too long now. They deserve to be afforded an opportunity to voice their aspirations for independence through universal suffrage. Lesotho will continue to stand with them in their pursuit of emancipation.

As the plight of the Palestinian people worsens, the hope for the resolution of the crises in Syria and Iraq also diminishes. We cannot remain indifferent to the suffering of those innocent people. Unilateral actions that defy international agreements and United Nations resolutions will only worsen the situation of the Palestinians. A two-State solution, with Palestine and Israel living side by side in peace and harmony, remains the only viable option for the settlement of the Palestinian question. Achieving peace is a process that requires engagement, accommodation and genuineness. Peace cannot be achieved through war or oppression. All of us joined this Organization voluntarily and professed a love for peace. Our actions must also reflect that commitment.

In the same vein, the economic and commercial embargo imposed on Cuba continues to weigh heavily on our conscience. There is no doubt that that measure has had a negative impact on the people and the economy of Cuba. We call for the embargo to be lifted and for Cuba to be reintegrated into the world trading system.

In today's globalized world it is indefensible and incomprehensible that decisions that bind us all are left in the hands of a few Member States. Our advocacy for the democratization of the United Nations must be intensified. Reform of the Security Council, one that takes into account the aspirations of Africa, as set out in the Ezulwini Consensus, cannot be postponed any longer. Transparency, inclusivity and democracy must inform the work of the entire United Nations system.

It is equally important to underscore that the gains made in the field of disarmament are being eroded gradually. Small arms and light weapons continue to flood the illegal market. The threat of the use of weapons of mass destruction has re-emerged, and the United Nations is paralysed by the current size, allocation of membership and power configuration of the Security Council, making the call for the reform of that organ even more urgent.

Mr. Sokhonn (Cambodia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In conclusion, I note that the United Nations, to a very large extent, has attempted to put people at the centre of its core business. However, still more needs to be done. I appeal to all present to shun those who seek to divide and incite us against each other. It is through our solidarity, more than anything else, that the United Nations will thrive and successfully put humankind at the centre of its activities. The United Nations is the only platform that enables us to embrace true multilateralism.

At the same time, let us remember that, although we may have a shared vision and leadership determined to address peace, equity and sustainability challenges, the truth is that we are mortal beings with intellectual and other constraints. As such, we need to acknowledge that there is a divine Power above, which is the source of true wisdom. Let us therefore keep our communication lines with God open in order to find real and lasting solutions to the world problems that so often besiege us.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Browne (Antigua and Barbuda): Year after year, Government leaders from across the world travel to this Hall in the United Nations in the hope of finding a pathway to universal peace and progress, which has persistently eluded us all. The people of our nations — rich and poor, large and small — have long since stopped paying much attention to, or caring about, what is said here. For them this place is a talk shop where much is said and not enough is being done to change their lives or give them good reason to believe that a better life is coming. What they know is that they live in a world in which 1 per cent of humankind controls more wealth than the other 99 per cent. What they see is a world controlled by a few powerful nations that impose their will on all the others in perpetuation of a system of sectional dominance.

To the children of Syria, Palestine, Israel, Yemen and Afghanistan who do not know a life without war, without bombs, without conflicts and without violent confrontation, the promise of turning swords into ploughshares is a meaningless phrase. To the people in sub-Saharan Africa and many parts of Latin America and Asia, the World Bank's dream, emblazoned on its grand entrance in Washington, D.C., of a world free of poverty, continues to be a nightmare they relive every waking moment.

The fundamental undertaking by all nations, as set out in the Charter of the United Nations, namely,

> "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small",

stands in stark contradiction to the reality of refugees from Africa, Latin America and war-torn countries, who are forced to flee their homelands to try to cross the borders of the rich — some literally in cages.

Why, then, did I travel to the United Nations? Why am I standing at this rostrum when I could be in my own country tending to its affairs and trying, as best I can, to improve my people's lives? I am here because none of the crises I just described exists in isolation. Each of them engulfs us all, and at this forum, at least, I can raise my voice for the disadvantaged and dispossessed, including my own people in Antigua and Barbuda.

History has taught us that no nation should believe that its individual oasis of wealth, prosperity and advantage can continue to exist and expand if the rest of the globe is a wasteland. The reality is that the world is a global neighbourhood. No place on our planet is distant any longer, and neither are the issues that plague it. The hopes and aspirations of all those communities — and, yes, their terrors, their torments and their fears — are shared by everyone. If they have not yet reached Member States' doorstep, at the rate we are going they are certainly coming soon.

Walls around the rich cannot keep out diseases that are carried on the winds blowing from neglected pools of poverty. Migrants will not halt their determined trek from their homelands in search of better conditions until circumstances in their own countries improve. While the Governments and political parties in those countries bear a great responsibility to respect and uphold the human, civil and political rights of their citizens, the global community, particularly the rich, has an obligation to contribute to the economic development of those countries. Human freedoms, like fragile plants, even in the purest air cannot take root and thrive in conditions of deprivation and dispossession.

For all those reasons, our nations, collectively and acting in a united way, must act to improve the human condition. It is an imperative. That is why the revitalization of the General Assembly is vital, urgent and important. For instance, without the inclusion of all States Members of the United Nations in the discussions on global financial reforms, there can be no real comprehension of the grave vulnerability of small

States to external shocks, high levels of poverty and high debt-to-gross-domestic-product ratios.

A few privileged nations are making decisions that impact the livelihoods of billions. The exclusive clubs of the Group of Seven and the Group of 20 cannot repair the fragmented international financial system without taking full account of the circumstances and views of the majority of the world's nations, and neither can the European Commission, which now seeks to impose its own anti-competition, high-tax policies on developing countries around the world.

Limits on participation limit ideas, innovation and human development. Arbitrary rules set by unrepresentative bodies for their own narrow purposes have no legitimacy in the world. The enforcement of those arbitrary rules by the threats and sanctions of the mighty is not legitimate. It results only in grumbling and reluctant acquiescence that lacks enduring support. The might exercised by enforcers does not make their actions right.

That is why the General Assembly must be revitalized. Its revitalization would serve to give this gathering relevance and would help address meaningfully the indifference of the peoples of the world towards the Organization, about which I spoke at the beginning of this statement.

The special value of the General Assembly is its universality of membership and the fact that the voice of every Member State can be raised, but it must be seen to be more than a place for talk. It must be a place for action and for results. For years the General Assembly has been marginalized by the Security Council and by the notion that a small group of powerful countries should make decisions for the rest of the world. Where is the democracy in that type of behaviour? That erroneous thinking has crept into every multilateral organization. It is so in the World Trade Organization (WTO); it is so in the International Monetary Fund; and it is so in the World Bank. The General Assembly must become the principal organ of the United Nations system — the only system that every nation of the world accepts and to which they all subscribe.

That is what the Charter of the United Nations promised, and that is what nations expect. The failure to deliver on that promise has undermined multilateralism and encouraged the abuse of power by the powerful few and has frustrated people all over the world. Unless the General Assembly is revitalized and made relevant, the actions of the Security Council and other organizations will be endured, but not embraced; they will be accepted, but not respected; and they will be enforced, but not legitimized.

Despite the risk of my call falling on deaf ears, I hereby make the call once again for a reinvigorated and relevant General Assembly. I recognize that it would not serve the interests of the powerful, who fear the expression of dissent and the call for political rights, rights that many of the powerful demand should exist in other countries, but I would be neglectful of my duty of care and my responsibility to the poor and vulnerable and to the silenced and stifled if I did not raise this clarion call for greater and fairer representation for all the world's peoples.

As the leader of my country, I put its interests first. However, I know that in standing up for my country first it would be foolhardy to stand up for my country alone. That would be a dog-eat-dog policy that, if practiced by every nation, would result in short-term gains for the richer ones, but ultimately in losses for all. My country would soon run out of friends, run out of foreign investors and, more important, run out of markets for its goods and services. The analogy applies to countries much larger than mine, even the richest and most powerful, even those who believe that they are invincible. For when they have weakened all others to strengthen themselves, to whom will they sell their goods and services and how will they maintain their high standard of living and increase their wealth? Humankind itself is our global community that provides all of us with enduring citizenship. Loyalty to myopic, nationalistic ideals cannot trump patriotism towards our common humankind.

I recognize that today all nations of the world are interdependent in the effort to stop the spread of disease, curb the effects of climate change, make our peoples safe from terrorists and organized crime, share knowledge and technology and have access to one another's markets to trade in goods and services, thereby improving the lives of all people. Today's world will be able to maintain and broaden peace, security and prosperity only through international teamwork. There is no other way. No one nation, however powerful, can go it alone. That is why my country supports denuclearization by North Korea and Iran. It is why we would like to see all countries eliminate their nuclear arsenals. Global peace will not be won by a balance of terror, and that is what pointing nuclear warheads at

each other is all about. It is a balance of terror. It is a zero-sum game that is playing with the survival of our planet and all humankind. No one should be playing that game, no matter how rich or powerful they are. In my country's own Caribbean region, we have strongly advocated for a zone of peace. For too many centuries, our area has been the site of other peoples' conflicts and ambitions. We had no say in those conflicts, which have left our region with a long shadow of stunted growth, dispossession and underdevelopment. We want no more to be the theatre of the proxy wars of others. We want the chance to grow and develop, to claim a place under the sun and to make our unique contribution to human progress.

For that reason we welcome a recent visit to Cuba by the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee of the United States, Mr. Bob Corker, to talk about relations between the two countries. We understand that progress is never made in a straight line. There have been many zigs and many zags, but after five decades of imposing a trade embargo on Cuba the senselessness of that policy should be obvious to all. It is time to end it and to provide the Cuban people with the chance they have been so long denied to put their well-known talents in medicine, the arts, music and education at the disposal of all humankind. We again call on the Congress of the United States to abandon the outdated trade embargo of Cuba and renew the avenues of dialogue and cooperation that offer beneficial prospects for the peoples of both countries, and by extension to all the Americas.

In the same vein, we urge all nations to recall that the countries of the United Nations committed themselves, 13 years ago, to the responsibility to protect their own populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. What we did not do was to give any country or group of countries the right to intervene uninvited in the affairs of any other country. We certainly did not authorize military intervention in any way, shape or form. What we agreed was that there is a collective responsibility to encourage and help each country uphold its individual commitment to protect its own people, and we declared our preparedness to take timely and decisive action, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, to help them to do so.

We all know that, in the words of the Charter itself,

> "Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state".

In that connection, when the General Assembly at its seventy-third session once again discusses this matter, we must strongly discourage bellicose talk of military intervention in any State by any other State or group of States. The responsibility to protect must not be used as political cover for vigilante action to justify intervention in any country. The encouragement of military interventions would mortally wound the United Nations as a legitimate and effective body. That is a prospect to be firmly eschewed. Therefore when and if the United Nations decides that democracy and human rights have been emasculated by tyranny in any country, it is the United Nations collectively that must authorize and carry out any agreed action — the words of former United States Republican President Dwight Eisenhower:

> "If the United Nations once admits that international disputes can be settled by using force, then we will have destroyed the foundation of the Organization and our best hope of establishing a world order."

The United Nations must always be a manifestation of the better angels of our common humanity, through which we must seek a world of security and freedom governed by justice and moral law. Together we must assert the pre-eminence of right over might and the general good over narrow sectional aims. That is why my country calls for a renewed commitment to multilateralism and a rejection of trade wars. Goods and services together represent more than 28 per cent of the global gross domestic product, but the escalation of trade wars will lead to severe disruption across the globe. No country will be spared and, incidentally, the worst affected will be those that wage those wars. That disruption has already started, and its effects are being felt globally.

Already, even though my country is not involved in any trade war with anyone, it is experiencing the downside of trade wars between our trading partners, as prices of our imports from them rise, pushing up the cost of living. The World Trade Organization is not a perfect mechanism for solving trade disputes, but walking away from it and tearing it down would do nothing except to destabilize the world's trading system, which is fundamental to the well-being of

all. It is up to all nations, rich and poor, to make the system work by improving it and by honouring their individual commitments.

Fifteen years after winning an arbitration at the WTO, my little country is still awaiting an acceptable settlement by the United States to honour its obligation to us. That is right — 15 years later we are still waiting. The United States economy is 20,000 times larger than that of Antigua and Barbuda. The compensation for the injury to my small country is less than 0.008 per cent of one year of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the United States. The injury that was done to my country's economy now amounts to over 20 per cent of its GDP. No country can easily absorb that severe a blow, which hurts our economy, sets back our infrastructural development and constrains the provision of employment and advances in health and education. That my people have been able to survive that pain speaks to their resilience, of which I am extremely proud, but they should not be made to endure it.

Of course, the WTO is powerless to enforce its own awards, and my country has no means to do so. We rely on respect for the international system, adherence to international law and the conscience of the mighty to do right to the weak whom they have injured. That is a struggle in which my country will continue to engage. We will not relent. And we will do so not in anger or in enmity, but in calm and in comity until justice is achieved. We owe it to our small island community not to rest until justice is done. As I said before, we will not relent on that issue.

In the context of justice, the refusal by some countries, particularly those that are the worst contributors to greenhouse-gas emissions, to admit to the harmful effects of climate change and to take remedial action is an act of injustice. Small countries such as Antigua and Barbuda contribute the least to harmful carbon emissions — less than 0.01 per cent. Yet, along with other small States in the Caribbean and the Pacific, we are its greatest victims. The injury to our countries continues without compensation, causing our economies to decline, creating refugees within our States, scaring away foreign investors, escalating the costs of insurance and rebuilding and increasing the level of our debt. Those are the realities of climate change.

Last year's hurricane season cost the Caribbean region more than $150 billion. To put that in perspective, the overall economy of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) totals $80 billion. That means that the damage to countries within our subregion last year alone was almost twice the size of all our economies combined. Almost a year ago today, a CARICOM-United Nations high-level pledging conference was convened to assist Caribbean countries that were affected by Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Billions of dollars were pledged, although they were insufficient to meet the costs. More importantly, unfortunately, less than half of the pledges have been delivered. Reconstruction is far from done; rebuilding lives and livelihoods will challenge us for some time to come. Where is the justice?

The Caribbean has been fortunate this year in that we have so far survived the hurricane season. We watched in anguish and with enormous sympathy and empathy the destruction wrought by Hurricane Florence on the Carolinas in the United States. We mourned the loss of lives — a pain we know only too well. What the destruction of the Carolinas this year and the ruin of Caribbean countries last year served to emphasize to us is that borders may separate nations but they do not insulate them from the shared dangers of climate change. Sovereignty and patriotism do not give sanctuary from calamity; disaster befalls the wealthy as well as the poor.

That is why we continue to urge for a global policy dialogue that integrates the environment with development and that accepts the fundamental understanding that every country — with no exceptions — must play a meaningful role, within its means, to stop the persistent deterioration of our lives caused by climate change. The problem is global, and it requires a global solution. It requires the commitment of all. What the world needs is a recommitment to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, including a commitment to the replenishment of the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund.

On behalf of the people of my country, the people of the Caribbean and Pacific islands, the people who live in the eye of storms such as those afflicting the eastern seaboard of the United States, I urge all countries to come to the table of dialogue and to stand by the agreements we have made and the treaties we sign. Our shared planet and our common humanity depend upon it.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Pavel Filip, Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Pavel Filip, Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Mr. Pavel Filip, Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Filip (Republic of Moldova) (*spoke in Moldovan; English text provided by the delegation*): I would like to begin by congratulating Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session and to wish her success in fulfilling her important mandate. Furthermore, I would like to thank Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for the fruitful actions he carried out in his capacity as President of the General Assembly during the previous session and to wish him success in his future endeavours.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the late former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, a true leader and promoter of United Nations values, who will remain in the memory of the Organization as one of the most distinguished and dedicated supporters of humanitarianism and global peace.

For more than 70 years, the United Nations has been at the centre of multilateral diplomacy, playing a primary role in global processes from international peace and security to the promotion of human rights and sustainable development. While the international environment continues to evolve, now is a crucial moment in which the United Nations must adapt itself in order to meet the challenges of the modern world. Hence we welcome the initiatives of Secretary-General António Guterres, which he has been carrying out since his first day in office. In particular, we welcome the reform aimed at enhancing the performance of the Secretariat in the area of international peace and security by focusing on conflict prevention as a top priority. Furthermore, we support the efforts to reform United Nations management by streamlining functions and increasing the accountability of all of the branches of the Secretariat in the fulfilment of their mandate. Finally, the recent decision to reposition the United Nations development system by enabling it to effectively contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, which were agreed three years ago, is particularly important.

Undoubtedly, those initiatives are very complex and will bring systemic changes across the entire Organization. In order to ensure that those reforms yield the expected results in the medium and long terms, transparent and constructive dialogue among United Nations management and States Members of the Organization must continue.

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will definitely be a milestone in the work of the Organization for years to come. The reform of the United Nations development system comes at a time when the implementation of that Agenda must be accelerated at all levels in a joint effort of the United Nations system and Member States.

We welcome the new reform vision by which the private sector will be more actively involved in the achievement of sustainable development at the global, regional and national levels. That partnership has the potential to provide a new impetus for progress and innovation, including for financial mobilization aimed at filling the funding gaps that the Organization is currently facing.

Bearing in mind the Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Government of the Republic of Moldova has developed, through an inclusive and participatory process, a vision of a new development strategy called Moldova 2030, which is fully aligned with its international commitments, including the Moldova-European Union Association Agreement. That new development strategy highlights the well-being and human rights of our citizens and the protection of the environment, as well as cultivating an inclusive society, as its top priorities.

There are several ongoing projects aimed at realizing those objectives. We are currently implementing an ambitious national programme to rehabilitate the road infrastructure across the country in order to improve

the connectivity and mobility of people, goods and services. We are introducing greater innovation and technology in public services for greater accessibility, better quality and transparency and in order to eliminate corruption.

We have taken an important step forward towards the integration of the Republic of Moldova into the European energy market by signing an agreement with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development for the financing of the largest energy project in the Republic of Moldova since its independence. The country's energy independence is crucial to its sustainable development and social stability. We are working actively with our international partners, including United Nations agencies and programmes in the area of the environment, to continually develop renewable energy and reduce gas emissions in accordance with our international commitments. Given the complexity of the 2030 Agenda, we are pursuing several other initiatives as part of our comprehensive sustainable development vision, which we are implementing together with the United Nations and our partners, in line with the new integrated approach.

While the United Nations managed to establish a vision for reform in the field of development in the General Assembly resolution adopted last May (resolution 72/91), in the security sphere, where political factors are more predominant, deficiencies persist. The effectiveness and relevance of the United Nations in that area cannot be fully achieved simply through the internal restructuring of its Secretariat. The delay in the reform of the Security Council over the past 25 years has not contributed to respect for the Charter of the United Nations, international law or the maintenance of international peace and security, which are the core prerogatives of the Organization.

We follow with great concern the violent conflicts that are taking place in various parts of the world with severe consequences for the civilian population. The inability of the Security Council to take effective measures in those situations raises a legitimate question about its relevance as a decision-making body for international security. From that perspective, reform is key to restoring the relevance and authority of the Security Council and, by extension, that of the entire United Nations, in matters of international peace and security. The Republic of Moldova supports the vision of an effective, representative, democratic and inclusive Security Council that is capable of swiftly responding to complex security challenges. Furthermore, as we have stated several times in the past, we advocate for the designation of an additional non-permanent seat in the Council to the Group of Eastern European States. And we hope that the membership of the General Assembly will come to an agreement on outstanding reform issues sooner rather than later.

The Charter of the United Nations requires the Organization to play a proactive role in maintaining international peace and security and in ensuring respect for Member States' sovereignty and territorial integrity. By bringing matters arising from challenges to their sovereignty, territorial integrity and national security before the General Assembly, Member States do not seek confrontation or the politicization of the work of the Assembly. It is only natural for such States to turn to the United Nations for assistance in promoting and encouraging solutions based on the strict observance of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

During the high-level segment of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, I reiterated, from this high rostrum, the calls to the United Nations to focus meaningfully on a grave breach of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, namely, the continued presence of Russian military forces and armaments on the territory of the Republic of Moldova without our consent and against our express wishes (see A/72/PV.15). I also appealed to Member States to support the inclusion of an item focused on that pressing political, legal and security issue for the Republic of Moldova in the agenda of General Assembly. I am pleased to note that the General Assembly adopted a resolution that declared in a straightforward manner the incompatibility of the political preconditions that underpin the Russian Federation's continuing refusal to withdraw its military forces and armaments from Moldovan soil with the norms of international law and the Charter of the United Nations (resolution 72/282). By adopting that resolution, on 22 June, the General Assembly also unequivocally stressed that the Russian Federation's non-compliance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations has led to a clear violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova and that Russia must withdraw its military forces unconditionally, completely and without further delay. The resolution is a first and important milestone for consolidating the support of the United Nations for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. In that context,

I would like to express our deep gratitude to all of the Member States that sponsored that resolution or supported its adoption.

Last week, following the recommendation by the General Committee, the General Assembly decided by consensus to include in the agenda of the seventy-third session a new item entitled "Complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova" (see A/73/PV.3). The Government of the Republic of Moldova welcomes that important decision, which comes at a time when internal and subregional security has worsened owing to the repeated, unlawful and destabilizing activities undertaken by the foreign military forces and the unconstitutional power structures in the eastern part of the country. The military exercises conducted jointly by the operational group of Russian forces in Moldova, which are stationed illegally on our soil, and the paramilitaries of the unconstitutional power structures have increased in scope and frequency, which represents a continued violation of the 1992 Moldovan-Russian ceasefire agreement, which includes an explicit legally binding commitment on the part of the Russian Federation to ensure the neutrality of Russian military forces during the process of their withdrawal from the territory of the Republic of Moldova. The illegal joint military exercises are aimed at upgrading the military-offensive capacity of the unconstitutional power structures and at undermining international efforts aimed at the peaceful resolution of the protracted Transnistrian problem. Other States members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have echoed the Republic of Moldova in its repeated expressions of deep concern with regard to those unlawful and ongoing destabilizing exercises, which run contrary to the obligations undertaken by the Russian Federation in the framework of the 5+2 international settlement format.

From this rostrum today, we appeal once again to the Russian Federation to discontinue those illegal and provocative activities and to resume, unconditionally and without further delay, the process of withdrawing its troops and armaments, in accordance with its legal commitments under the 1999 OSCE Istanbul summit outcome document and in observance of its obligations under international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The complete and unconditional withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova will undoubtedly facilitate the process of settling the Transnistrian conflict and help reintegrate the country. Despite the many difficulties encountered in the settlement process, the Moldovan authorities are determined to find a political solution to the protracted, externally generated conflict in the eastern part of the Republic of Moldova, within the 5+2 negotiating format. For us, it is extremely important that that solution be based on full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova, with the provision of a special status for the Transnistrian region, as stipulated in the relevant OSCE documents.

I would now like to refer briefly to the goal of European integration, which guides the reform agenda of my country, particularly through the application of the Association Agreement with the European Union (EU). By aligning the Republic of Moldova with EU principles and standards and by harmonizing Moldovan national legislation with European legislation, we aim to bring our country closer to the EU and to ensure the sustainability of the modernization process.

The extent of our cooperation with the EU is broad. It includes several dimensions, including engaging in constructive and intensive political dialogue, creating a free and comprehensive trade zone, promoting intersectoral cooperation and taking stock of opportunities for collaboration within the Eastern Partnership. In economic terms, the Association Agreement is a big step forward for the economy of the Republic of Moldova, as the European Union has become the country's main trading partner. Several positive results have been achieved that facilitate trade in key sectors, including increasing the competitiveness of our goods and services, and opening up new opportunities for local producers. I am convinced that the implementation of the Association Agreement is the best and most viable option for ensuring prosperity and sustainable development for the Republic of Moldova and will warrant making the path to EU integration irreversible.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming the commitment of my country to continuously promoting respect for Charter of the United Nations and to contributing to the achievement of internationally agreed United Nations goals. I would also like to express the hope that the initiatives recently launched to strengthen the Organization's capacities will contribute to achieving improved performance in terms of development and international peace and security.

We shall remain true to United Nations ideals and will work to uphold the Organization's capacity to ensure respect for international law.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pavel Filip, Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Ms. Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister, Minister for National Security and the Civil Service, and Minister for Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment of Barbados

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for National Security and the Civil Service, and Minister for Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment of Barbados.

Ms. Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister, Minister for National Security and the Civil Service, and Minister for Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment of Barbados, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister, Minister for National Security and the Civil Service, and Minister for Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment of Barbados, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

Ms. Mottley (Barbados): Let me begin by congratulating Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, and in particular for being the fourth woman in the 73-year history of the United Nations to receive the high honour of being elevated to the position of President of the General Assembly.

However, I would like to pause at this stage, because I came here with a speech that is impossible for me to deliver given the events that have happened in the past 24 hours in the world in which we live and that cannot be ignored. Those events include the transit of a tropical storm across my own country that we thought would have passed us by, only to have floods hit many of our communities overnight, the onslaught of that same storm on our sister country, Saint Lucia, an earthquake off the shores of Martinique, Guadeloupe and Dominica this morning, which did not affect land but destabilized those islands, an earthquake and tsunami off Indonesia earlier today, and a typhoon that is about to deal a blow to the people of Japan. Those events are of great concern because the world in which we live is a very different world from the one we have known.

I ask myself, what does all that matter? Last year the Prime Minister of Dominica stood at this rostrum within days of the passage of a hurricane so violent that to describe it as a category 5 hurricane would be to do injustice to what the people of Dominica were exposed to (see A/72/PV.19). The Assembly heard my colleague the Prime Minister of Antigua speak earlier of the fact that over $140 billion in damage has come to the Caribbean region as a result of those weather systems. I therefore ask the interpreters today to bear with me, because it is impossible to deliver a speech that is focused on anything else other than our reality in the Caribbean, our reality in the Pacific islands, our reality in the world in which we live.

As Heads of Government, we have asked the international community to address those issues, both in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and as we come to twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, against the background of climate change consisting of a warming of as much as 2°C. But two days ago, at the One Planet Summit, a graph was shown that has haunted me for the past 48 hours. That graph spoke to the fate of the world with respect to the tipping points for a warming of 3° Celsius and under, for 3° to 5°, and for over 5°. For a change of 3° Celsius and under, for which we are now on course because of our inability to take decisive action, the Arctic, the Antarctic and Greenland, as well as the coral islands and their people — the people of the region from which I come — are at terrible risk.

For us it is about saving lives; for others it is about saving profits. We have reached the stage where we ask the global community to recognize that what is at stake is simply not an academic debate. It is simply not a question of the profits of multinational corporations. But the evidence is clear and decisive that it is the lives and the livelihoods of our people that are at stake.

I ask the Assembly, how can we just listen to speech after speech after speech about the problem? How many more speeches must we listen to before we realize that agreements are necessary to fund the effort

to address climate change, as well as agreements to cap our emissions. We cannot accept a change of 2°C, because a change of 2° means a rising sea level of 1.5 to 2 metres for our islands. For islands like ours much of our economy is based on our coasts. The international community must begin to understand what it will be like for us by the end of the century. Matters pertaining to migration and security will become ever more pressing in this world if we do not put a stop our growing emissions.

I have therefore come here today not to talk about a wide range of issues. There are those who would wish that I would speak on denuclearization, and our voice will be heard on that issue, as the statement that I originally planned to deliver will be distributed. There are those who would wish that we should also speak on a matter that is gravely affecting our community — chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs) — and we shall speak on that continuously in other forums, because it is affecting one in every four of our citizens. There are those who would want me to speak also about the graduation of middle-income countries to a status where we have lost access to finance, which, ironically, affects our ability to adapt our environments, economies and societies to confront climate change and its vagaries.

But when we make those arguments in forum after forum after forum, we are met with stern faces and a determination that our per capita income — as if that were the real factor in how people eat and how people move and how people sleep — should now preclude us from being able to have access to the very funding needed to protect our people from the worst ravages of the storms, earthquakes and fires that beset us. I ask this global community to pause and reflect. As we learned when we went to San Francisco two weeks ago for the Global Climate Action Summit, time is truly running out on us.

We will make the decisions that we have to make on a national level. We have committed to banning single-use plastics and styrofoam starting in April 2019. We will try to become a fossil-fuel-free country by 2030. But what does that mean against the backdrop of a world that is not prepared to put the funding in place to be able to stop the worst aspects of climate change? What does that mean to people who have to rely on a Green Climate Fund because their per capita income or their capacity to provide for their people is simply not there? Is this a sterile environment, or is this an environment that recognizes that, mighty or small, we in this world must protect each other?

As a small State we are accustomed to being treated sometimes as if we did not exist. That is what happened when de-risking from correspondent banking became the order of the day in the past few years, as if it were possible to cut a region off from access to trade and expect it to be able to pay for goods and services, despite the fact that its banks can no longer have relationships with banks outside its borders. The only time people were treated like that before was in the previous century when we separated persons out of the general population as lepers. But the countries that come here to the United Nations as sovereign countries begin to ask themselves, do we now live in a world where the mighty manoeuvre to make the majority into minions? Or is this still a world that was promised to us in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, upholding respect for the dignity of all?

We as small States need a corridor of stability. We simply do not have the buffer to be able to withstand the shocks of international economic and financial crises. We do not have the ability to withstand climate shock, or the capacity to come to grips with the pervasive nature of chronic NCDs. Those are the things that destabilize us. But to that is added the removal of the insurance policy of the United Nations — an Organization that may not be well known or popular by name among our citizens, but an organization nevertheless without which we could not have made the gains that we have made with respect to the reduction in childhood mortality, with respect to the billions of people being lifted out of abject poverty, or with respect to us being able as a world to create zones of peace, as we hope our Caribbean region will always be, not like in previous centuries, when it became a theatre of battle.

The United Nations matters to us. It protects the small, it constrains the large and it gives us the ability to be able to plan for the future in that corridor of stability. When multilateralism is taken away from us, what are we left with and who is left to protect us? Who will hear us, and on whose platform will we be able to call not just upon the Governments of the world but also on the people of the world? For what is clearly required now is a behavioural change so that we can constrain the madness that is taking place and restore global governance so as to counter the unilateral actions of many.

We ask ourselves, how do our citizens feel that we must come here year after year and make the call year after year as we do? From Barbados we come here and we speak about the embargo against the people of Cuba — year after year — almost as if it were pro forma. But it is not pro forma for the people in La Habana or Santiago. We speak about territorial disputes but we see no major gains with respect to them. That may be tolerable for certain things, but it cannot be acceptable for the issue of climate change. That is a matter of life and death for us.

We stand here conscious that, in many respects, today's world looks like the world of 100 years ago — the world that my grandparents inhabited, with its concentration of wealth, inequity and disposition to nationalism and xenophobia. And what did that lead to 100 years ago? It led to two world wars and an atomic bomb. I repeat, it led to two world wars and an atomic bomb. There are some who might say that it was the occurrence of those wars that gave rise to the United Nations, because the circumstances at that time forced nations to agree when they might otherwise not have agreed.

I truly pray that this world does not need to see greater calamity or greater loss of life to understand what is required of each and every one of us, as we stand in trust on behalf of the people whom we represent and who demand decisive action. We are not expected to achieve it all. The Talmud says that we are not even expected to complete the task, but we are not at liberty to resile from it. We in the Caribbean and in the Pacific need the world to look again at a commitment to a change of no more than 1.5° C, because 2° would be calamitous. We need dedicated financing for development in accordance with the Addis Ababa Action Plan, which speaks about small island developing States. We need the world to recognize that the graph that showed the tipping points must not serve to reinforce our greatest fear, namely, that the world believes that we are dispensable. For that was how we felt a century and more ago.

I raise the question in the same way that I understand that our principles must remain constant. Fifty-two years ago, the first Prime Minister of Barbados stood at this rostrum and articulated a principle that binds us still today, namely, that we in Barbados shall, in the conduct of our international relations, forever be friends of all and satellites of none (see A/PV.1487). That is absolutely still our principle, but the world in which we live is no longer the world that existed when he delivered those comments. The baton has been passed from leader to leader, but it is time now for us in this Hall and in my country to recognize that that baton must be held firmly, because the storms, tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes and fires threaten to take the baton from us. I pray that the United Nations recognizes that the year 2020 is but 15 months away and that there will be a point of no return.

This is not a science-fiction movie. This is not a cartoon. And if I ever thought that it was a fantasy, what transpired in the last 24 hours across the different poles of the world has reminded me that it is not. I leave here to cut short my trip so that I can go home to my country. Some may say that, in spite of the flooding, we were lucky that tropical storm Kirk did not do greater damage. Two weeks ago in San Francisco, it was Isaac. I say simply that we cannot plan our affairs, or those of our people, on the basis of luck. It must be on the basis of policy and decisive action, but above all else on the basis of caring and empathy. I ask the world to pause — pause — and let us get this one right, because it is not about Governments anymore. It is about people.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister for National Security and the Civil Service, and Minister for Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment of Barbados for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister, Minister for National Security and the Civil Service, and Minister for Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment of Barbados, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Ricky Nelson Houenipwela, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands.

Mr. Ricky Nelson Houenipwela, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Ricky Nelson Houenipwela, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Houenipwela (Solomon Islands): At the outset, allow me, on behalf of my Government and the people of Solomon Islands, to convey our warmest greetings to

the President and the members of the General Assembly. We offer our warmest congratulations to the President on her election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I am confident that she will ably guide our deliberations during the current session. I assure her of my delegation's full support and cooperation during her tenure in office. I also commend and thank her predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajcák, for his sterling stewardship of the previous session, and we thank him for his leadership.

Solomon Islands also joins other members in mourning the loss of the late Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General and a proud son of Ghana and Africa. We acknowledge his immense contributions to the work of our Organization. The late Kofi Annan was truly a global statesman.

I welcome the theme chosen for this session. It reflects the ultimate goal that this organ strives to achieve. "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies" is indeed a powerful theme. It speaks of a united world, with both equal responsibilities and equal opportunities. It also speaks of the need to be united in order to achieve peace and tranquillity among all our nations and peoples.

The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of Agenda 2030 requires a unified global partnership, and the achievement of those Goals requires the concerted efforts of all stakeholders to mobilize all available resources. Agenda 2030 recognizes that by acting together we can conquer the inequities that have befallen us today, be they man-made or natural. The Goals also reflect the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations, which speaks powerfully of our mission to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, the dignity and worth of the human person and the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small. The Preamble clearly articulates the principle of universality for all peoples and all nations regardless of their size.

Unfortunately, the world has entered an era in which the foundation and strengths of multilateralism are being challenged and undermined by unilateral State posturing and manoeuvres. We have seen a proliferation of insularly focused policies on the part of some countries, causing them to renege on their commitments under various international frameworks and treaties. The United Nations enables us to consolidate our collective resolve and solidarity for the maintenance of international peace and security, promote sustainable development, advance respect for human rights and promote the rule of law.

Solomon Islands reaffirms its commitment to achieving the SDGs by 2030. To that end, we have incorporated the SDGs into our national development strategy for the period 2016-2035. We also welcome the midterm review of the small islands developing States (SIDS) Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway. It is my hope that the outcomes of the review will provide the impetus needed to reinvigorate the special case for SIDS going forward. The review should also ensure that all partners and stakeholders, together with SIDS, more effectively address the challenges faced by SIDS and take full advantage of opportunities through genuine and durable partnerships. Solomon Islands acknowledges that achieving the SDGs will be an arduous and challenging task. However, it is a path that we must trek. We welcome all the assistance and support we have received from our development partners towards that cause.

This year Solomon Islands met two of the three criteria for graduation from the status of a least developed country (LDC) for the second consecutive time. The Committee for Development Policy recommended that Solomon Islands graduate from the list of LDCs. The Economic and Social Council has also recommended that this organ consider and endorse our graduation accordingly.

While my Government appreciates the report and its recommendations, I must point out that, as a post-conflict State, Solomon Islands will require the development of appropriate prudent macroeconomic and financial policies in order to maintain the threshold indicators upon which the recommendation for graduation is premised. It is therefore my fervent hope that the Assembly will grant Solomon Islands an opportunity to properly assess the potential impacts of LDC graduation on the key sectors that sustain our economy. A predictable and workable strategy that would put us on a continued upward trajectory will need to be developed as well. I call on the United Nations system to support us in those assessments and in the development of appropriate strategies that could assist us to move forward boldly and with confidence.

The Solomon Islands Government respects the process of graduation, which is based on an agreed

rules-based system, and we will endeavour to graduate from the LDC status. However, any appropriate and relevant assessment undertaken of the country must be well-conceived, thorough and consultative. As Members States are aware, the graduation of SIDS from LDC status will not improve the problem of our vulnerabilities. In that connection, we are pleased to know that a special task force has been established to ensure a smooth transition of SIDS from LDC status.

While we in Solomon Islands are not subject to threats of an armed invasion, we are nevertheless continuously being invaded by a common enemy, one that the international community calls climate change. Climate change is now the greatest threat facing humankind. For us in the Pacific islands that threat is existential. The resulting climate-change-related extreme weather events mean that Solomon Islands — like other Pacific island countries and as we have just heard, the Caribbean — is increasingly susceptible to natural disasters of great severity. The threat of sea-level rise, as well as the inundation and salination of arable land and the destruction of biodiversity, partially caused by a warming ocean and acidification, are elements that give rise to food-security concerns, and increase the risk of potential conflicts.

In the light of that threat, Solomon Islands calls for collective global leadership on climate change action and strengthened commitment to achieving positive outcomes during the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which is to be held in Katowice, Poland, this year. Solomon Islands joins other Pacific island States in strongly urging the largest emitters of greenhouse gases to take urgent actions to reduce those harmful emissions: reduce now, or regret later. In the ongoing dialogue on climate challenge, appropriate financial support to SIDS to address their losses and the damage resulting from the destructive effects of climate change must be seriously considered.

In our efforts to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and meet our intended nationally determined contributions, Solomon Islands remains committed to transitioning to the use of renewable energy. On behalf of my Government and the people of Solomon Islands, I extend our gratitude to our partners, including the World Bank, the Green Climate Fund, the Economic Development Cooperation Fund of Korea, the Australian Development Assistance Bureau and the Asian Development Bank, for their financial assistance and support for the Tina River hydrodevelopment project. When completed, that project will provide approximately 80 per cent of the power needs of Honiara, our capital. I also acknowledge the bilateral assistance provided by the Governments of Italy, Spain, Austria and Luxembourg to the Pacific small island developing States, including Solomon Islands, to support renewable energy projects. We look forward to continuing those partnerships in the coming years.

Adequate and quality infrastructure is a prerequisite for positive economic and inclusive growth. Investment in infrastructure projects positively impacts a majority of the population and enhances accessibility to goods and services, both private and public. In that connection, Solomon Islands is grateful to the Government and the people of Japan for their assistance in implementing the transformative development of major infrastructure, such as the Honiara city main roads, the Honiara seaport and the proposed upgrade of Honiara International Airport. The opening of the second international airport, in Munda, and the undersea fibre-optic cables are also game-changing infrastructures. The people and the Government of Solomon Islands are grateful for that valuable assistance from Australia and New Zealand.

Solomon Islands has benefited from South-South cooperation on capacity-development programmes with countries such as Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Cuba, including the potential to explore other innovative opportunities such as pharmaceutical solutions. The people of Solomon Islands are forever grateful to all of our development partners for their genuine and durable partnerships. We will collaborate and increase efforts going forward.

As a large ocean State, the issue of the conservation and proper management of ocean resources is an important priority for Solomon Islands. We will actively engage on matters concerning the management of oceans. With regard to oceans management on the high seas, my Government welcomes the recent first intergovernmental conference to negotiate an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. A successful outcome in the form of a fair and equitable framework will again prove the relevance of the Organization and its convening powers.

At the regional level, Solomon Islands subscribes to the Blue Pacific initiative, which sets the context for the development of our regional priorities. We believe that maintaining the well-being of the oceans should be a key priority, as acknowledged in SDG 14. The restoration of fish stocks, the implementation of science-based management measures and monitoring, control and enforcement are but some of the measures that Solomon Islands is promoting through domestic and regional arrangements.

At the national level, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that we are in the final stages of developing an ocean policy that will rationalize and enhance the coordination and implementation of all ocean-related legislation and policies. The development of the national policy is a voluntary commitment that we announced at last year's Ocean Conference.

Security concerns have become more complex. They now involve activities beyond the traditional definitions. Some of them now include new threats such as climate change, cybercrimes and transnational organized crime, among others. It is therefore now more important than ever that we work more closely and collectively with the international community to address those security concerns and threats.

This year we witnessed constructive engagement towards the better management of relations on the Korean peninsula. The United Nations must continue to ensure that conflict prevention and resolution remain a central plank in its work, as mandated by the Charter of the United Nations.

Solomon Islands recognizes that stability in the Middle East is critical to world peace. A peaceful Middle East will lead to a prosperous world. Solomon Islands also continues to call for the peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and supports a two-State solution.

In the Pacific, security concerns are driven by external factors, human security and climate-change challenges. In recognizing the importance of our changing security landscape, the Pacific Islands Forum leaders undertook to build on the positive platform established by the Biketawa Declaration. That culminated in our adoption, earlier this month, of the Boe Declaration at the recent Pacific Islands Forum summit held in Nauru. As we continue to work towards the goal of global peace, the need to actively engage in peacekeeping remains.

Although small, Solomon Islands is contributing to the achievement of global peace and security through its participation in the United Nations peacekeeping programme. So far, Solomon Islands has contributed 12 officers to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. Solomon Islands is committed to increasing its participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions. Cognizant of the important role of United Nations peacekeeping missions, we call on Member States to work collectively to ensure that the sustainability of United Nations programmes is not undermined by funding shortfalls. Having benefited from the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, my country values the importance of peacekeeping missions.

Adequate resources are required in order to sustain peace. I am sure that the international community also recognizes that. In that connection, Solomon Islands has benefited from the Peacebuilding Fund, approved by the Peacebuilding Commission in November 2017. Through the resources provided under the Peacebuilding Fund, we have been able to facilitate dialogue involving a wide range of stakeholders on key issues, including land reform, rural development, border issues and the participation of youth and women.

Recognizing the complex and ever-changing global-security landscape and realities, Solomon Islands reiterates the call for the reforms of the Security Council to be inclusive, by expanding the focus of the Council to non-traditional security priorities. Small island developing States must have a voice through a dedicated seat in the non-permanent membership category in the Council.

The biggest threat facing the Pacific islands, apart from climate change, is the threat caused by non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Approximately 70 to 80 per cent of all deaths in the Pacific can be attributed to NCDs, with many of those deaths being premature. In the Pacific, including in Solomon Islands, the high prevalence of NCDs translates into an economic burden on health-care systems. Two thirds of the beds in the National Referral Hospital in Honiara, our capital, are occupied by NCD patients. The burden that NCDs poses on the productivity of the people of Solomon Islands and the opportunities forgone in order to provide care for NCD patients make that issue a key socioeconomic concern for an economy with a small human-resource base. The international community has already acknowledged, in the Samoa Pathway, the

challenges posed by NCDs to small island developing States. Now is the time for action.

While we speak of leaving no one behind, we still close our doors to Taiwan and continue to contradict our own principles by leaving Taiwan's 23 million people behind. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals requires a unified global partnership. Taiwan is ready, willing and able to engage in, and contribute to, the wide range of substantive United Nations programmes for the welfare of humankind. Solomon Islands continues to call for the participation of Taiwan in United Nations specialized bodies, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the World Health Organization and the International Civil Aviation Organization. Taiwan is the twenty-second-largest economy in the world and, as such, Taiwan should be part of global solutions in the various international frameworks. I believe that Taiwan has a lot to contribute through its experience and technological capability. If we are to focus on shared responsibility and promote peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies, we should give Taiwan and its 23 million people a chance. Despite the contributions made by Taiwan to the well-being of the citizens of the globe, we continue to ignore the right of Taiwan to self-determination. The time has come for the Assembly to give due recognition to Taiwan as a legitimate member of the family of nations.

It is important that the administering Powers of non-self-governing territories and all the relevant organizations honour their commitments made under the Charter and the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. To that end and in accordance with the 1998 Nouméa Accord, Solomon Islands welcomes the free and fair referendum to be held in New Caledonia on 4 November. Solomon Islands reaffirms that human rights principles are universal, indivisible and interrelated and must be treated in a fair manner. All States have the moral duty and responsibility to uphold, respect and promote human rights and, where necessary, take preventive, protective and punitive measures against human rights abuses and violations.

Solomon Islands recognizes and respects Indonesia's sovereignty over its territorial boundaries. My Government commits to working with the Government of Indonesia on areas of mutual interest, including human rights concerns in Papua and West Papua.

Solomon Islands is committed to the principles of good governance and transparency. We have passed an anti-corruption act, which aims to eliminate the scourge of corruption from all levels of our society. In addition, our Parliament has passed a whistle-blower protection act, thereby giving due protection to those who bring issues of corruption to the attention of the relevant authorities. Solomon Islands is also committed to democratic principles and processes. We are equally committed to the holding of free and fair elections in early 2019.

Solomon Islands is an ardent believer in collective action. We are staunch supporters of multilateralism. As such, we stand in solidarity with all members of the Assembly — the pinnacle of multilateralism. Without the United Nations, we would not, as a small island country, be able to be heard. Other louder voices would drown us out. Our expectations from the Organization remain high. As such, adequate resources for programmes and projects that will have an impact on citizens are needed. The United Nations has flaws, but Solomon Islands continues to feel the impact of the power of working together on global issues that are championed by the United Nations. We believe that the principles and values upon which the United Nations was founded remain relevant.

Making the United Nations relevant to all people is not just about standing up and talking about it in the General Assembly Hall. It is incumbent upon us all to be seen as making the United Nations relevant to all peoples in the actions that we take individually and collectively.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ricky Nelson Houenipwela, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Khurelsukh Ukhnaa, Prime Minister of Mongolia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Mongolia.

Mr. Khurelsukh Ukhnaa, Prime Minister of Mongolia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Khurelsukh Ukhnaa,

Prime Minister of Mongolia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Ukhnaa (Mongolia) (*spoke in Mongolian; English text provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I wish to express my heartfelt congratulations to Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on being elected President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I pledge my delegation's full support and cooperation in the discharge of her heavy responsibilities.

Today we are living in a flat, globalized and interrelated world. Our life is digitalized to a great extent, and our way of life is greatly shaped by technological progress. In spite of such developments, we encounter a plethora of global flashpoints, including conflicts, poverty, hunger and inequality. I am therefore glad to represent my Government in this general debate, which will deliberate issues relating to making the United Nations more relevant to all people and making the world more peaceful, equitable and sustainable.

Over the past 73 years, the United Nations has reached out to and assisted every Member State as part of its diligent activities to promote peace, justice and global understanding. Accordingly, under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is timely for the United Nations to endeavour, in line with its founding principles, to reach every individual in Member States. Mongolia appreciates the leadership that Secretary-General António Guterres has shown through his reform initiatives in reinforcing the joint efforts of Member States to leave no one behind. We support his reform initiatives in the peace and security architecture, which are aimed at ensuring stronger prevention and mediation activities and making peacekeeping operations more cost-effective, as well as his initiatives aimed at repositioning the United Nations development system, which aspire to reform the United Nations so as to create a more effective, well-coordinated, transparent and accountable organization.

According to a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, world military expenditures are estimated to have reached $1.7 trillion in 2017. That is not only an increase over the previous year, but also the highest level of such expenditures since the end of the Cold War. The arms race shows no sign of abating, and the situations in some regions are unstable owing to deteriorating conflicts. The use of technological advancements in armed conflicts is making the world situation more dangerous than ever. Mongolia has always held the principled position that conflicts should be resolved peacefully and through dialogue. Based on our peaceful philosophy, originating in our national mentality and religious beliefs, we have always supported peace and security initiatives proposed at the General Assembly and other forums, and have striven to be a responsible member of the Organization.

With regard to Mongolia's initiatives aimed at demonstrating its contributions to peace and security at the global and regional levels, I need mention only the resolutions on Disarmament Week, which has been observed from 24 to 30 October every year since 1978; the Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace, adopted in 1984; and my country's declaration as a nuclear-weapon-free State in 1992, the status of which we continue to guarantee. Mongolians have a saying that, "It is better to give a needle in time of need rather than to give a camel when wealthy" — or, as it is said in English, "A friend in need is a friend indeed". Mongolians always try to assist other nations and people when they are in need or seek peace and stability. On one such occasion, we brought hundreds of orphans from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to Mongolia following the Korean War and subsequently raised them. During past decades, we have stretched out our hands to the extent possible to a number of countries that have faced natural disasters and terrorist acts, while rendering development assistance to countries of the region and sharing our modest experience with democratic transition.

This year we are celebrating the seventieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping, which has contributed immensely to world peace and security. Mongolia first joined United Nations peacekeeping in 2002, with the deployment of unarmed military observers, and began deploying troops in 2006. Today we are proud of our troops, who have been praised by the international community for their robust, calm and appropriate approach to peacekeeping. As one of the major 30 troop-contributing countries, as well as one of the leaders in terms of troop deployment per capita, Mongolia envisages increasing its participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations and fully supports the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative.

Addressing security issues in North-East Asia is one of our foreign-policy priorities, as it has a direct impact on our security and development. Mongolia has been closely following and has welcomed recent positive

developments on the Korean peninsula, including the inter-Korean and other bilateral summits, which have provided an important impetus to confidence-building and ensuring peace and security in North-East Asia. However, we are not merely observing the process, but are also trying to contribute to it. Since the 1980s, we have been consistently pursuing the policy of launching a dialogue mechanism in North-East Asia. Those efforts yielded the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security — an international conference that has been held annually since 2014. The Dialogue is currently developing into an open and inclusive mechanism that brings together both Government officials and representatives from academia from all of the countries in the subregion. Discussion topics cover a broad range of issues, including security, energy, infrastructure, green development and opportunities for humanitarian cooperation, among others.

Asia is one of the most disaster-prone regions of the world. We actively support regional cooperation for enhancing disaster resilience, reducing disaster risk and increasing the effectiveness of disaster-prevention activities. Within that framework, we have proposed an initiative to establish the Northeast Asia Disaster Risk Reduction Platform in Mongolia. The proposal was discussed at the conferences of the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security and the second Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, successfully hosted in Ulaanbaatar in July, which received warm support from the countries of the region with regard to its implementation. Mongolians believe that neighbours share the same disposition and interests. As Mongolia is determined to develop strategic partnerships with its two big neighbours, it closely follows their initiatives at the regional level and strives to engage with them in every possible way. We recently proposed initiatives to facilitate travel for nationals of countries along the Belt and Road corridor and proposed the Peace, Prosperity, Progress, Promise Award for junior diplomats and scholars from Belt and Road countries.

Undoubtedly, many of the armed conflicts, rivalries, insurgencies and terrorist attacks that trouble us today have been caused by the clash of civilizations and religions. Mongolia is one of the few nations that has had no religious or ethnic wars in its history. The great Mongolian Empire, established 812 years ago, was governed by a written and codified law, and it was a genuine home of religious freedom, where Christians, Muslims, Confucians and Buddhists were treated equally and lived together without any ideological struggle. In brief, the legacy of religious tolerance and respect in the Mongolian Empire, which covered an immense swathe of territory, is very instructive for today's world. More recently, during the era of the Cold War in the twentieth century, we carried out specific activities aimed at bringing together the voices of international Buddhists to support world peace through the Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace (ABCP), which was established in 1969 and has achieved tangible results in combating ideological divisions.

We perceive a pressing need today for effective dialogue mechanisms, such as the ABCP, which enjoys consultative status in the Economic and Social Council. We are therefore determined to revitalize its activities at the regional and international levels. In that regard, as a regional hub connecting North-East and Central Asian countries, we are announcing, from this rostrum, our initiative to host the Conference on Religious Freedom in Mongolia in March 2019. We are confident that our initiative will contribute constructively to new developments in the culture of peace and religious tolerance and freedom worldwide.

Mongolia was one of the early adopters of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the national level, with the adoption of its own Sustainable Development Vision 2030 in February 2016. In accordance with its Vision, by 2030 Mongolia aspires to consolidate its democratic governance, preserve ecological balance, eradicate poverty in all its forms and rank among the upper-middle-income countries. My Government has been taking important steps to ensure coherence between the SDGs and the national development policies that have been implemented previously and translate them into short- and medium-term plans and programmes. In order to provide financing for development, an investment programme has been adopted in line with the Government action plan. Moreover, SDG indicators were developed based on multi-stakeholder consultations and will be adopted shortly.

Mongolia has witnessed an economic resurgence with accelerated foreign-trade turnover, increased investment and a budget surplus over the past two years. However, Mongolian economic growth, which is highly dependent on mining and vulnerable to commodity prices, tends to be unstable and risky in terms of ensuring the allocation of financial resources for the

implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in years of commodity-price decline. Moreover, another challenge faced by my Government involves ensuring that every citizen benefits from economic growth. For instance, following the recent economic growth, unemployment, but not poverty, decreased modestly. We are therefore introducing measures aimed at reducing income disparities and poverty into all relevant Government programmes and sectoral plans, while compiling a comprehensive database of low-income households and supporting public-private partnerships. In order to resolve issues comprehensively, the national programme on reducing poverty and unemployment will be launched shortly.

This year we are celebrating the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — a milestone document in the history of human rights. In accordance with the ideals enshrined in the Declaration, Mongolia has made remarkable progress in the area of the promotion and protection of human rights. In recent years particular importance has been attached to the issues of enhancing gender equality, protecting the rights of children, the elderly and persons with disabilities, combating human trafficking and drugs, and ensuring freedom of speech and expression. For the period from 2016 to 2018, Mongolia has been serving as a member of the Human Rights Council for the first time. It has been an honour for us to contribute to global endeavours to protect and promote human rights. Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can be fully realized.

Following the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, Member States have continued working constructively on the issue of migration. We expect that the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration will be adopted in Marrakesh, Morocco, in December on the historic day marking the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and will serve as a valuable document in terms of ensuring the protection of the rights of all migrants. The world has witnessed the highest level of population displacement ever over the past two decades. That phenomenon has not spared my country, which has a small population and is located in the highlands of North-East Asia.

We are experiencing a high volume of internal and external migration for a number of reasons, including unemployment and poverty. Owing to a large number of citizens who have been moving from the countryside to cities since the 1990s, as of 2017 45 per cent of our total population lives in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar, with a net annual growth of 22.3 per cent. The social ramifications include poverty, unemployment, poor access to health-care services and a high level of air pollution in the capital city as compared with other areas. The citizens of Mongolia are highly educated. The fact that the second-largest portion of the 2018 State budget has been allocated to the education sector demonstrates the Government's firm commitment to prioritize human-resource development. However, access to schools and the quality of education has not always kept pace with demographic growth, rates of urbanization and modern education standards. While the pupil-to-classroom ratio in schools and kindergartens has decreased together with the population density in rural areas, the opposite is true in urban centres. It was troubling for me to hear at one of my public meetings in Ulaanbaatar last year that the 10-year-old child of a citizen had to walk home at 9 p.m. through dark winter streets, as the temperature dropped to between -24°C and -25°C on his way back home after the third shift of his school, which does not provide bus service.

The Government of Mongolia is planning and implementing policies and programmes that aim, by 2030, to address effectively the challenges faced by living in the capital, including kindergarten shortages, the fact that approximately 30 suburban schools must operate in three shifts, the overloading of family hospitals and the adverse affects of air pollution on people's health, as well as the issue of unemployed people in Ulaanbaatar, who account for one third of the nation's unemployed. Furthermore, approximately 5 per cent of our total working-age population is working abroad, and that percentage is increasing. We therefore need to take comprehensive measures to resolve issues pertaining to their health care, social insurance and dual citizenship, and improve the related legal environment.

Climate change is yet another daunting challenge for humankind today, along with peace, security and development issues. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change has been ratified by 179 countries. However, the implementation rate is not living up to expectations, and the fulfilment of shared responsibilities by States Members remains insufficient. We therefore welcome and support the Secretary-General's timely initiative to convene the United Nations 2019 Climate Summit

for reviewing the Paris Agreement commitments. Global warming and climate change impact all nations, and they are felt more intensely in the context of the economic and social development of the least-developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. In that regard, I would like to highlight that, through the initiative and leadership of Mongolia, the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries has been established in Ulaanbaatar and became fully operational in May. The International Think Tank — the first-ever intergovernmental organization representing the 32 landlocked developing countries — will carry out policy research and implement feasible projects to address common challenges and protect the interests and positions of those countries with the purpose of augmenting their ability to benefit from international trade. I am confident that members will continue their cooperation and support for the activities of the Think Tank, as they have done in the past.

In Mongolia, where extreme weather conditions prevail and the economy mostly relies on mining and agriculture, the scope, frequency and negative impact of disasters — such as earthquakes, desertification, soil erosion and forest fires — have increased in recent years. I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Assembly that, during United Nations Climate Week, my delegation will be screening a documentary entitled *Blue Gold*. We are sharing that documentary with members not only to show the devastating impact of climate change in Mongolia, but also to sound the alarm about similar consequences elsewhere and appeal for timely protective steps to be taken.

In conclusion, I would like to call, from this United Nations rostrum, for unity among all nations in a spirit of mutual trust and awareness of our responsibilities for the sake not only of the current but also of future generations, as well as to strive for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Mongolia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Khurelsukh Ukhnaa, Prime Minister of Mongolia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Simon Coveney, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade with responsibility for Brexit of Ireland.

Mr. Coveney (Ireland): The General Assembly is meeting this week as we mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of the late Nelson Mandela of South Africa and as we mourn the recent death of Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations. They were two great leaders from Africa,whose personal commitment to the values and principles of multilateralism was unwavering — something that we should reflect upon and, I hope, draw inspiration from, particularly at a time of global instability and of open challenges to the very approach to the global decision-making process that has been the foundation of this institution. Ireland was honoured to have been asked to co-facilitate the consultative process with Member States to produce the political declaration adopted at the Mandela Peace Summit (resolution 73/1) on Monday. Nelson Mandela and Kofi Annan were revered and loved in my country. In order to do justice to their legacy, we must renew our efforts to actively work for a culture of peace, tolerance and respect for human dignity globally. Is that not fundamentally what the United Nations should be about today? Can we not challenge ourselves to use the Peace Summit and this week at the General Assembly to strive, with the courage and humility that Mandela and Annan showed, for the type of world that they envisioned and fought for? In truth, we must do much better than we are currently doing to live up to the aspirations that they represented.

Geographically, Ireland is a small island on the western edge of Europe, but in Ireland we see ourselves as an island at the centre of the world, with a global diaspora more than 10 times the size of our population at home. We have learned that, in an interdependent world, the challenges of our time do not respect geographic boundaries. Finding solutions is surely now a shared responsibility and — whether a small Polynesian island or a super-Power — we all breathe the same air. That sense of shared responsibility guides Ireland's view of the world and the part that we are trying to play in it. Almost a century ago, Ireland became an independent State, thereby escaping a history of colonialism. Ours is hardly a unique story, but it is one that I hope allows us in Ireland to empathize with so many of the countries represented in this Hall. Like the United Nations itself, we were born out of conflict. It has shaped how we view the world and our current responsibilities as global citizens. Our membership in the United Nations has played, and continues to play, a major part in our development. We not only support a fair, rules-based order in international affairs, but we exist, survive and

prosper because of it. We see no viable alternative to that approach.

In peacekeeping, disarmament, sustainable development, climate-change issues, nutrition, human rights and humanitarian assistance, we have striven to match our words with actions, along with increased funding and support for multilateral structures. While the system has its flaws and always requires improvement and modernization, Ireland is convinced that there is no other way to meaningfully address the common opportunities and threats that face us all. For Ireland — and, I suggest, for many smaller Member States as well — multilateralism strengthens our independence, self-confidence and security, rather than diminishes it. If one believes, like Ireland, in multilateralism, now is the time to fight for it across the United Nations system, including, if necessary, standing in opposition to powerful countries that have traditionally played great leadership roles within this institution. We certainly cannot — and I will never — defend a logic that views multinational engagement as an abdication of national leadership or as a loss of influence on the international stage. We urgently need global leadership that galvanizes global support through strength of argument, as opposed to economic or military strength, and that leads to finding solutions to our collective problems so as to raise living standards for everybody, in particular for those furthest behind. We must start believing in a world where solidarity is just as, if not more, important as sovereignty — a world where we live in each other's shelter and not shadow.

We need — and I believe that we must demand during weeks like this one — positive outward-looking leadership by the great Powers of the United Nations, particularly Powers that traditionally have been indispensable, if imperfect, forces for good across the world. Without that, in truth, I fear for the future of global stability, and I fear for the future of the United Nations in the work that it must do — work that can never be replicated or replaced by transactional bilateral engagement where the powerful dominate decision-making, and decisions are no longer based on the strength of argument, compassion or generosity, but are instead based on States being forced to choose sides, fearful, perhaps, of being offside with the strong and powerful, or, in some cases, singled out for special treatment if they do not provide their support. Ireland does not wish to see any diminution in the role played by the United Nations leading actors and funders. At the same time, we will always demand a place on the stage for everyone and an atmosphere that encourages free speech and new, if sometimes controversial, thinking. The United Nations foundations will crumble without the inclusivity and generosity of thinking embedded through decades of experience. Sometimes it is the smallest States that have the answers to the biggest problems.

Today we cannot be complacent about the institutional reforms needed to maximize the United Nations legitimacy and relevance in a rapidly changing world. Ireland salutes the efforts of the Secretary-General and welcomes the steps taken by the General Assembly on reform, but the implementation of those reforms will be our real test of success. Ireland particularly wants to see the successful reform of the United Nations development system aimed at better supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. That is why my Government earlier this month pledged more than $1 million in support of the reform of the United Nations development system as a complement to the strong financial support that Ireland has an obligation to continue to provide to United Nations funds, programmes and agencies.

However, reforms at the United Nations must go beyond the managerial and structural level. The United Nations political bodies must also catch up to where the rest of the world is right now. That is particularly the case regarding the Security Council. Ireland is clear on the need to increase the size of the Council. Many areas of the world are either insufficiently represented in the Council or, in some cases, not represented at all. The historically unjust underrepresentation of Africa in particular needs to be addressed so that there can be an equitable African voice in Council decisions affecting their own continent, where much of the United Nations focus will be needed in the decades ahead. We know that. We also want to see the consideration of a designated role for small island developing States. The growing impact of climate change, which many speakers before me have mentioned, on international peace and security concerns adds weight to that call.

It is not only the composition of the Security Council, however, that needs to come under scrutiny. The use or threat of use of the veto remains a serious obstacle to the work of the Council, but also to that of the United Nations as a whole. Far too often the use of the veto has resulted in the shocking abandonment of

some of the most vulnerable people on our planet. The failure of the Security Council to take action to prevent mass-atrocity crimes betrays victims and undermines the United Nations credibility. History will not judge us kindly on that issue. I strongly believe that the political reform of the Council would inevitably lead to a greater sense of participation, responsibility and ownership among the United Nations membership, as a whole. That would surely only be positive for the functioning of the United Nations more broadly. Many say that people like me and others are wasting our time calling for the reform of the Security Council and that the great Powers will never allow it. That may be so, but if the power of evidence and argument is to mean anything in the Council Chamber, Ireland will keep trying to build a coalition for change.

While recognizing the need for new structures, we also need to make the best use of existing structures and, of course, always look to improve them. International criminal justice, where there has been an irreversible and, I hope, significant shift towards accountability, is one such example. It is particularly pertinent to recall that fact on the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Justice and accountability always provide a better alternative to revenge, impunity or amnesty. We have seen important developments in the area of gender-based and sexual violence by enabling the prosecution of sexual violence as a war crime, a crime against humanity and genocide. I am glad to say that we have witnessed universal justice strengthened beyond power politics and geopolitical interests. I am pleased to report that earlier this month, Ireland ratified the Amendments to the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court on the crime of aggression, which were agreed in Kampala. Yesterday I lodged our instrument of ratification with the Secretary-General.

Ireland welcomes the level of ambition at the heart of the Secretary-General's new disarmament agenda. We hope that it will serve as a turning point in the current challenges facing the disarmament and arms-control processes.

Ireland is proud of the historic role that it played in the development of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in the past century. The NPT demonstrates what States can achieve together in the spirit of peace and cooperation. However, we also have a responsibility to remain ambitious in the pursuit of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. I hope that our efforts to promote the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will continue to reflect that.

Ireland, like many in this Hall, is deeply concerned by the persistent use of explosive weapons in populated areas in armed conflicts around the globe. Civilian populations continue to bear the brunt of armed conflicts. We must redouble our efforts to fulfil the Secretary-General's call to address that challenge in a more comprehensive way than we have to date. We continue to call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abide by its obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions and its international commitments and to abandon all nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and ballistic-missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. We welcome the progress towards that end.

Ireland's multilateralism runs deep through our commitment to United Nations peacekeeping. Our contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations enjoys a special place in the hearts of the Irish people. This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of Ireland's participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions. Tens of thousands of Irish women and men have worn blue helmets or blue berets in United Nations peacekeeping operations over six decades, particularly on missions in Africa and the Middle East. Our Prime Minister stated here at United Nations Headquarters in July that we are as proud of the blue helmet as we are of the harp or the shamrock — symbols of Ireland. Today there are more than 500 Irish defence force personnel — men and, increasingly, women, I am glad to say — deployed across the Middle East and Africa in six United Nations missions.

The humanitarian and development work of the United Nations is central to Ireland's commitment to the Organization. However, we know that we have an obligation to do more. We have reaffirmed our commitment to achieving the United Nations target of providing 0.7 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance by 2030 — the same year that the world has pledged to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals. But in real terms what that means is that Ireland would have to increase its contribution to development from approximately €750 million a year to more than €2.5 billion a year over the next 10 to 12 years. We are ambitious for Ireland's international development cooperation, but we also

need to be authentic to our own experiences as we seek to maximize our contribution.

My country has known hunger and famine. We have known poverty. But we have also experienced transformation — a transformation based on education, innovation and a vibrant civic society. Of course, our values are not Ireland's alone. They are at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the future that most people in this Hall seek. We know that, in order to create a peaceful, fair and just world, we must respect the human rights of everyone. Economic progress cannot be delivered at the cost of equality for all and of protecting the most vulnerable in our societies. We must also go beyond rhetoric in our efforts to empower women and girls. Gender equality cannot be seen as a gift to be granted but rather as a fundamental driver that can underpin real improvements in the lives of so many people.

The need for collective action to address climate change has been a common theme this week and is more evident by the month. As an island State, we learned centuries ago that the waters surrounding our island cannot deter forces beyond our control. Isolation certainly does not mean safety. Since I spoke here last year (see A/72/PV.20), Ireland has experienced its first hurricane, generated in the eastern Atlantic, its most severe winter cold snap and, this summer, the most sustained drought in living memory. The denial of climate change needs to end, and collective action on climate adaptation, as well as mitigation, needs to intensify. Today many more island nations face challenges not of their own making as a result of climate change, pollution and rising sea levels. We must work together to overcome those challenges as nations united in our determination to protect ourselves and the way in which we live.

More broadly, the scale of the humanitarian crises facing the international community cannot be overstated. More than 134 million people around the world are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, with conflict being the single greatest driver of that need. As a country committed to the humanitarian principles, we will continue to contribute to international efforts to ease the plight of civilians suffering the impact of conflicts in places such as South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Syria, Yemen, Palestine and, unfortunately, many other parts of the world.

Today there are over 68 million people worldwide who have been forcibly displaced from their homes, with more than 25 million cross-border refugees. I am very conscious that a huge majority of displaced people are being sheltered in countries that are already experiencing high levels of vulnerability and poverty and that their generosity places a huge strain on already very limited resources. Ireland will continue to support refugees and vulnerable host communities. However, I want to particularly acknowledge the generosity of many States and the extraordinary burden that they bear today — States such as Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Egypt, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Pakistan, Turkey, Uganda and many more. Those countries host enormous numbers of people displaced by conflicts in neighbouring regions. We need to do more to help them.

Bangladesh is now host to the world's largest refugee camp, sheltering over 1 million refugees. In the year since I last addressed the General Assembly that camp has swelled with hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees fleeing appalling violence in their neighbouring home state. The Rohingya must be assured of a safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return, and the international community must insist on an end to impunity for the appalling acts of violence that have come to light, as well as ensure accountability for the crimes that have been committed.

Because of Ireland's experience of prolonged, intractable conflict, but one that ended in a successful peace settlement, the Israel-Palestine conflict and the lack of progress on a peace agreement have been a big foreign policy priority for me and for the Irish Government for many years. Ireland's own experience shows that even decades-long conflicts do have a turning point. Sometimes that turning point comes unexpectedly, and sometimes it happens quickly.

Peace is a process; it is not a moment. To bear fruit, that process requires untiring work and commitment. We all surely realize by now that forced outcomes with winners and losers can never be a basis for lasting peace. From all my visits to the Middle East, I know that the current situation serves the interests of neither people, but I am also conscious that the burden of being under occupation is the heavier one.

Settlement construction exacerbates that fact and is causing ever-greater damage to the prospects for peace. Ireland, like many, is very conscious of the threat to the small Bedouin village of Khan al-Ahmar and other

strategically located West Bank villages. Let me say this very clearly: what happens there will tell us much about whether we can count on a real commitment on the part of those involved to negotiating a two-State solution.

The situation in Gaza is also simply untenable, and the 1.9 million people living there desperately need the decade-long blockade to end so that they can start to rebuild normal lives and so that teenagers will reject the twisted promises of radicals and look to the future with some hope. They also need for the countries that fund terrorist activities, chaos and mismanagement in Gaza to halt their unwelcome interference without any further delay.

When I visited Gaza I was struck by how much people there rely on the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) — both to meet basic needs such as education and health care, but also to know that they are not forgotten. They are not forgotten by countries around the world. I am proud that Ireland is such a long-standing supporter of UNRWA, not just in Gaza but in the West Bank and across the region in Jordan and Lebanon too. Ireland will continue that assistance and has increased its contribution to €7 million for this year. I hope that before the end of the year we will have added even more to that, recognizing the financial pressures.

I greatly regret the recent cuts to UNRWA funding announced by the United States, and I plead with those in power in that country to reconsider the consequences of their decisions in that regard. Reform of UNRWA may be needed, but surely it should happen in the context of a peace deal and a functioning Palestinian State in the future. Shutting off funding now is simply adding to the turmoil of current pressures and hardship, where UNRWA cuts are interpreted — certainly locally, on the ground — as collective punishment targeting women and children as well as men.

Is it so hard to understand that increasing the misery of Palestinians only empowers the radicals, who want to poison the minds of hopeless, angry, young Palestinians and destabilize the moderate political leadership who are committed to a lasting peace? A people who have been downtrodden for decades will not be forced or pressurized into negotiating through enforced hardship or humiliation — the human soul simply does not work that way. How many examples of that do we need in order to learn that lesson? Without hope or dignity, minds close to the compromises that we all know are necessary for a final settlement and for peace.

I believe there is a way forward in the Middle East with American leadership, but also with the support and involvement of other countries that can help to broker a peace deal between an Israel that justifiably demands security in any future deal and a Palestinian people who dream of their own country and State. I know that Ireland is a small player in all of that, but we will continue to advocate honestly for progress and justice as a friend of both Israel and Palestine.

Member States know that Ireland is a proud and ambitious candidate for a seat on the Security Council at the elections that will be held in June 2020. We have been making our case better known with States over the past months. My apologies if we have been overdoing it. We Irish are by nature bridge-builders and talkers, but we listen too — to all sides — and work to build collective solutions to our global challenges. We are committed to hearing and heeding the voices of all States to forge consensus and common purpose. We think independently. Our path is very much our own, and we bring no partisan agenda to the table. We are here to serve the wider good and to support the United Nations. We will always fight for a multilateral system that works for all, particularly the small and the weak. We will be courageous when the United Nations and all of its Members need courage and leadership from the Security Council. Empathy, partnership and independence will guide us.

Ireland is a small country with a broad mind, a listening ear and a strong independent voice that promotes the values that I hope we all share and that can take this institution forward with confidence and fairness in the future.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Adel Ahmed Al-Jubeir, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Al-Jubeir (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it is my pleasure to congratulate Her Excellency María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I wish her every success in her tasks. I also wish to congratulate her predecessor, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, President during the previous session, for his efforts. It would be remiss of me not to commend as well the tireless efforts undertaken by His

Excellency Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations,

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is founded on a great legacy of principles and constant elements that underpin its foreign policy, at the top of which is its permanent ambition to achieve peaceful solutions to conflicts, while preventing their escalation by undertaking mediation efforts in order to achieve that noble objective. Perhaps the best illustration of the responsible political role played by my country in the promotion of international peace and security is the peace agreement concluded recently in the city of Jeddah between Ethiopia and Eritrea, under the auspices of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. The agreement brought to an end the longest-lasting conflict on the African continent. Another illustration is the historic meeting held under the auspices of my country between the leaders of Eritrea and Djibouti after they had shunned all contacts with each other for 10 years.

The Palestinian question has been pivotal for my country and the Islamic world. It is our conviction that the Palestinian people have the right to build an independent Palestinian State within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. We reiterate our call to redouble sincere efforts aimed at ending that conflict, which has lasted longer than any other in the region.

The Houthi terrorist militias of Iran continue to launch ballistic missiles manufactured and supplied by Iran towards Saudi cities — there have been 199 such missiles to date. Their activities seek to destabilize the safety and security of navigation in the Bab Al-Mandab region and the Red Sea. My country reiterates our commitment to the need for a political settlement to the situation in Yemen based on three terms of reference, namely, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative, the outcomes of the Yemeni National Dialogue Conference and Security Council resolution 2216 (2015).

We will continue to provide and facilitate all humanitarian efforts to alleviate the disastrous situation facing the brotherly Yemeni people. We also seek to fully support the Yemeni economy, including through the recent deposit of $2 billion in the Central Bank of Yemen, which was ordered by His Majesty King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. The humanitarian support provided by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Yemen over the past four years amounts to more than $13 billion.

Terrorism and extremism are two of the major challenges faced by the whole world. Our region has not been spared from the scourge of terrorist groups. In that context, we reiterate our call for greater international cooperation to end terrorism in all its forms, cut off its funding sources and punish those who support terrorists or facilitate their activities in any way. The efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to that end are clear to everyone. My country has established institutions to fight extremism and terrorism, namely, the Global Center for Combating Extremist Ideology, the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition, made up of more than 40 States, and the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, to which my country has contributed $110 million.

Iran continues its terrorist activities and aggressive behaviour. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia expresses its support for the new United States strategy for dealing with Iran, which includes seriously addressing its nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes and its support for terrorism. Our country believes that, in order to achieve peace and stability in the Middle East, it is necessary to deter Iran from exercising its expansionist and subversive policies. Iran has formed armed terrorist militias and provided them with ballistic missiles. It has conducted assassinations targeting diplomats and committed acts of aggression against diplomatic missions. In addition, Iran has stirred up sectarian strife and interfered in the affairs of countries in the region. Such aggressive behaviour constitutes a glaring violation of all international covenants and treaties, as well as Security Council resolutions. That is why Iran is under international sanctions.

Mr. Arrocha Ruíz (Panama), Vice-President, took the Chair.

As part of our resolute and continuous efforts to counter terrorism, my country, along with the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Arab Republic of Egypt, has broken off all contacts with the State of Qatar, a State that continues to support terrorism, sponsor extremists and spread hateful rhetoric through its media, while failing to uphold its obligations under the Riyadh Agreement of 2013 and Riyadh Supplementary Agreement of 2014, which is unacceptable. Qatar has persisted in its practices, which has left us with no choice but to boycott it.

In the eighth year of the Syrian crisis, the humanitarian situation requires all of us to shoulder our responsibilities. My country, from the very first day of the outbreak of the crisis, has sought to care for the Syrian people to help them realize their ambitions to live in safety on their own soil. In that regard, we reiterate the need to implement Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) and reach a political solution in line with the principles of the Geneva communiqué (A/66/865, annex). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has worked to unite the Syrian opposition groups so that they can negotiate with the regime and ensure Syria's security, stability and unity and prevent foreign intervention or any attempt to partition the country.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia supports legitimacy in Libya. We recall the importance of upholding the Skhirat Agreement to resolve the Libyan crisis, and call for maintaining the unity and territorial integrity of Libya. We underscore our support for the United Nations efforts and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ghassan Salamé.

My country is among the leading donors of humanitarian and development assistance. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has contributed 3.7 per cent of the Saudi gross domestic product, thereby surpassing the percentage called for by the United Nations, namely, 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product.

The international order that has existed for centuries is based on the principle of respect for national sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries. Commitment to international norms and laws is of the utmost importance and is not up for discussion. Sovereignty is a red line that cannot be crossed. My country rejects any intervention in its domestic affairs and any form of dictate by any country.

The Government of my country, with the firm support of His Majesty King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, has placed its people at the core of development. Based on the Kingdom's Vision 2030, my country has opened doors for its citizens so that they can move towards the future, and has empowered young people and sought to benefit from their creative spirit. In addition, it has been employing modern technologies to serve development and make our country a leading environment for investment.

Women in my country have an active presence at all levels. Empowering women is a governmental goal so that they can have a full opportunity to contribute to development.

The vocation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is based on genuine partnership with the world, leading to a prosperous present and a bright future. That would enable the next generations to live in security, stability and peace. We wish our Organization further success in achieving its lofty objectives.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Péter Szijjártó, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary.

Mr. Szijjártó (Hungary): History usually defines certain periods by the major developments and phenomena that occur during that period. If you pose the question as to which development or which phenomenon history will select to identify the current period that we have been living in, then the answer is pretty obvious. The huge migratory waves that we are experiencing globally are how history will identify our current era. Those huge migratory waves impose a significant security risk almost everywhere in the world. They have destabilized a number of countries over the past years. They have caused serious political debates globally. They bring with them the threat of terror and its consequences, which are more serious than ever — even in those parts of the world that have not experienced that phenomenon before. Migratory waves are not beneficial for anyone, certainly neither for those who must risk their lives to get to another place in the world nor for those countries that end up having to host a large number of people coming from different cultures. Those huge migratory waves lead only to the creation of parallel societies, with very serious security implications.

I come from a Central European country whose territory saw 400,000 illegal migrants march through it in 2015. Those migrants violated our borders. They showed disrespect for our regulations, our culture and our way of life. The migrants attacked the police. They rejected any kind of cooperation with the local authorities. They occupied public areas. And they threatened people and families.

We Hungarians have first-hand experience with illegal migration — we did not just see it on television or hear it from storytellers. We have first-hand, direct experience. Based on that, I can tell members that it is

no wonder that there are big debates going on globally as to how to handle that phenomenon. Unfortunately, I have to tell the Assembly that the European Union (EU) has failed to find an answer to that challenge. The European Union gave a very poor answer: instead of concentrating on how to stop migratory flows, the European Union concentrated on how to encourage and manage the flows. That is basically a policy of invitation and encouragement for further migratory waves to be launched.

As Member States might know, the European Union wanted to introduce a system of obligatory quotas to distribute migrants among the EU member States. Hungary is among those countries that rejected that approach and were subsequently blackmailed and punished. The European Union's approach to tackling migration has turned out to be very unsuccessful and harmful. If we reflect on recent years in Europe, we see that there have been more than 30 major terrorist attacks committed by persons with a migratory background since 2015. More than 300 people were killed and more than 1,000 injured. That was not a phenomenon that Europe had previously experienced.

European institutions in Brussels kept on saying that it was impossible to stop migration, but that is not true. The truth is that migratory waves can be stopped — we Hungarians have proved it, with the assistance of several Central European countries, such as the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland. We are spending more than €1 billion to build a fence on our southern border and have placed police and military officers there. We have proved that, yes, it is possible to stop the migratory waves, and it is possible to protect the borders of the countries I mentioned. Very recently, the Italian Minister of the Interior made an attempt to stop migratory waves on the maritime route. Instead of being praised, he was attacked very severely, as Hungary has been.

Based on the experiences of recent years, international efforts should seek to stop the migratory flows and put an end to policies that encourage further migratory waves. They are harmful and must be ended immediately. With respect to international law, international organizations should make it very clear that migration is simply not a fundamental human right. It is not a fundamental human right to pick a country where one would like to live and, in order to get there, violate a series of borders and ignore national and international regulations. That is not a fundamental human right.

Unfortunately, like some EU officials, United Nations officials have suggested a false context, as if migration were a fundamental human right. But that is not true; that is not the case. Despite recent global events that have proved that migration is a dangerous and unfavourable phenomenon that poses serious security challenges to many regions of the world, United Nations officials have tended to speak about migration as a source of prosperity, innovation and global wealth. It is as though migration were the best thing ever that happened to humankind; but that is a false and biased claim. That is why Hungary strongly opposes that position.

The United Nations is currently preparing to approve the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. I can tell Member States that that is the worst possible thing that the United Nations could do with regard to responding to the challenge posed by migration. Unfortunately, the United Nations is preparing to commit the same kind of mistake as was committed by the European Union. It is not without good reason that the United States left the negotiation process at the very beginning and that the Hungarian Government has also decided to disassociate itself, because we do not accept the principle of the global compact on migration. We do not accept the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration itself, and we will not take part in the approval mechanism. As we have stated, we absolutely do not consider it to be an obligation.

The global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration is a strongly biased, unbalanced and extremely pro-migration document. That is why it is very dangerous and will cause much harm to the world by encouraging further mass and illegal migratory waves. We strongly disagree with the basic approach of the global compact on migration, which tries to portray migration as though it provided a definition for the future of our globalized world, making us all countries of origin, transit and destination. Hungary does not want to be any of those three; we believe exactly the contrary, that the international community must respect the sovereignty of each country.

The international community must respect the right of States to make the safety and security of its own citizens a priority, and the international community

must respect the right of countries to decide whom they will and will not allow to enter their territory. All countries, all nations, have the right to decide with whom they would like to live. The international community should — and must — support countries in safeguarding their historical, religious and cultural heritage, as well as their social structure. The international community clearly must not put pressure on any country to get rid of its values or heritage or to change such phenomena.

Unfortunately, the global compact on migration suggests that migration would be the best answer to the challenges regarding demography and the labour market. We strongly disagree with that. We believe the contrary — that the international community must respect the sovereign rights of every country to make its own decisions regarding its own economic and social policy, which is supposed to be the most successful for that given country. The international community must respect the sovereign right of a country to control its own policies with regard to labour market regulations, economic policies and addressing demographic trends.

The global compact on migration suggests that the border protection measures of certain countries should be judged based on human rights. We find that approach extremely dangerous and harmful. That is why we strongly reject it. We believe the contrary. We believe that the protection of borders is a national security issue and is the obligation of every single country. Let me underline the fact that every State has the right and the responsibility to control its own border. The international community must support every State in successfully carrying out its border control responsibilities. The international community must make it clear that the illegal crossing of borders is a serious criminal offence. We must terminate policies that either encourage or mitigate illegal border crossing and those who commit that offence. Crossing borders should be possible only with full respect for international and national regulations. The violation of such regulations must result in serious consequences.

The global compact on migration also suggests that, by definition, a multicultural society is more valuable or better than a homogeneous society. Again, we strongly reject that definition and approach because it must be left up to the decision of the respective nation whether it believes that a multicultural society or a homogeneous society is more valuable. We Hungarians do not think that our society would be less valuable or worse than any other society that considers itself multicultural.

However, in sum, the greatest problem is that although the text of the global compact on migration states that the compact places individuals at its core, unfortunately, that is not true. The truth is that the compact takes only the rights, interests and well-being of migrants into consideration and does not say anything about the already existing fundamental human rights of those who would like to live their lives in their homes in safe and secure circumstances. I would like to make it clear that Hungary bases its migration policy on common sense. We do not want to see the events of 2015 repeated in Hungary. For us, the security and safety of Hungary and the Hungarian people are the top priority — first and foremost, security.

We continue to firmly and strictly protect our borders. We will not allow anyone to enter the territory of Hungary illegally. Instead of considering migration, we will continuously modernize our education system and help families to be able to raise more children in order to address the challenges of the labour market and demography in the meantime. We will preserve Hungary as a Hungarian country that is proud of its history and heritage. We urge the international community not to encourage further migratory waves to be launched but to stop the migratory flows now.

The international community must recognize that every person has the right to live in his or her homeland in peace and security. If that is not possible, we must help them to live in a dignified manner as close to their homes as possible until they can return there. Instead of suggesting that people risk their lives by taking to the road, pay millions of euros for the services of smuggling networks and leave their homes, we should bring help to where it is needed. Hungary helps the Christian communities in the Middle East. We spend many millions of euros on reconstructing houses that have been torn down, building schools, covering the medical expenditure of hospitals and giving scholarships to youngsters in the region. Church leaders from the Middle East usually ask us not to encourage members of their communities to leave but to help them to be able to stay where their communities have lived for centuries, or at least a long time.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform representatives that Hungary will not support the adoption of the global compact on migration because it is not in the national interest of our country. We will never give up our sovereign right, namely, that it is exclusively the Hungarian people who have the right

to make a decision about the future of Hungary, our country. We will always adhere to that right of ours.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Gilles Tonelli, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Monaco.

Mr. Tonelli (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): In February, President Espinosa Garcés presented her strategic vision for the seventy-third session of the General Assembly: "Dialogue and strengthening of multilateralism as a catalyst for the well-being of all persons and a sustainable planet". We welcome her commitment to the theme "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies".

The delegation of Monaco will support her so that, together, we can contribute to aligning our institutions with the Sustainable Development Goals to ensure that the high-level political forum that we will hold here next year delivers the necessary adjustments for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Dialogue and the promotion of multilateralism with a human face were also priorities of her predecessor, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák. Under his presidency, the work of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session facilitated the vital progress necessary for United Nations decisions to remain relevant. I would particularly like to emphasize the repositioning of the United Nations system for development as well as the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, which is to be formally adopted in Marrakech in December. We warmly thank him for having always listened to our representatives and for having prioritized the common interest, which is the guarantor for the success of multilateralism.

As the General Assembly commemorates the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December, how can we not recall the fact that, as the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations states, the reason that we, nations great and small, have committed to working together is "for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples"?

I would like to take this opportunity to thank President Bachelet for having rightly taken up the torch of Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We assure her of our support and congratulate Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein on never having avoided difficulties and on having assiduously championed the defence of human rights.

The United Nations and its Member States have continuously adapted to the new challenges posed by violence, conflict, transnational organized crime and the global scourge of terrorism. When the Security Council acts, it does so to ensure on behalf of all States international security and the protection of civilians. When the Council is prevented from acting, civilians, in particular women and children, pay an even higher price. In that regard, can we ignore the report of the Secretary-General (A/72/865), which notes in its paragraph 5 that in 2017, armed conflicts resulted in 6,000 proven cases of violations committed against children by Government forces and more than 15,000 by non-State armed groups? That is why Monaco supported the code of conduct regarding Security Council action against mass atrocity crimes at the seventieth session of the General Assembly.

In that spirit, we strongly condemn attacks against schools and hospitals, sexual violence and the denial of access to humanitarian aid. We firmly believe in the role of women in peace processes. We support the involvement of young people in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. In that understanding, Monaco supports Security Council resolutions on such issues.

As the Monaco Red Cross celebrates its seventieth anniversary this year, I would like to recall the Principality's commitment to strengthening respect for international humanitarian law. We also take this opportunity to pay tribute to all the men and women who have dedicated their lives to the Organization, tirelessly working to ensure that United Nations values prevail, and to the peacekeepers and United Nations officials who have died in the discharge of their mission.

Our country strongly supports the appointment by the Secretary-General of a Victims' Rights Advocate, entrusted with placing rights and dignity at the heart of the Organization's efforts and the zero-tolerance policy towards sexual harassment. We also hope that the principle of the responsibility to protect, contained in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1), will at last be acknowledged and harnessed as a tool for progress accepted by all.

Since joining the United Nations, Monaco has significantly strengthened its legal arsenal. Over

the past 25 years, Monaco has ratified, adhered to or accepted more than 40 international treaties on human rights, refugees, privileges and immunities, criminal issues, disarmament, the environment and the law of the sea and has signed eight such treaties.

Even if today less than 10 per cent of the world's population lives below the poverty line, the fact is that millions of human beings, including women and children, still live below that threshold and consequently are without access to education, health care, decent housing and work and opportunities for economic and social development.

In a world where artificial intelligence is developing and where genetic engineering and cyberspace are realities for many of us, how can we disregard the fact that more than 68 million people were forcibly displaced in 2017 and that the United Nations has delivered assistance to a record number of 105 million people in 40 countries? Is it acceptable that three out of 10 people do not have access to safe drinking water and six out of 10 to sanitation? The Central Emergency Response Fund, to which the Principality contributes, has also funded emergency assistance in 36 countries to the tune of $418 million.

As we know, the many crises and challenges that I have mentioned are interlinked. In that spirit, we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). However, what is the paramount challenge facing our human societies today? It is clearly that of climate change. Its systemic effects spare no region of the world and equally are factors in the geopolitical upheaval that exacerbates the inequality and conflict that daily we strive to combat in this forum. Today, if we do not act ambitiously and effectively to combat that scourge, tomorrow we will have to be ready to live on a devastated planet, where it will be very difficult to maintain peace.

I therefore endorse the Secretary-General's call, issued earlier this month, to end the paralysis, indifference and weak commitments to the challenge of climate change. Today, the term "crisis" is nearly obsolete. As Mr. Guterres recalled, to prevent the worst, we must change course by 2020. That is why it is imperative that the negotiations of the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Katowice, result in the adoption of rules allowing for the implementation of the Paris Agreement. For future generations, we must rise to that challenge.

Monaco is no exception to that framework. At the national level, the energy transition pact, launched at the beginning of the year, is ambitious and seeks to achieve the goal set by His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 following a 50 per cent reduction in greenhouse gases by 2030. That initiative represents a new concrete action by the Royal Government in order to meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement. The pact is a partnership among all elements of society and demonstrates the will of the Sovereign Prince for Monaco to remain a land of innovation, all the more so if that is likely to accelerate the transition to a carbon-free world.

In that regard, we also welcomed with the keenest interest the Secretary-General's intention to convene a climate summit in 2019. A few days before, Monaco will have hosted a meeting of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change with a view to issuing the special report on the ocean and cryosphere in a changing climate.

The maxim that there is no development without peace and no peace without development has continuously guided our work since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. However, progress is uneven and sometimes too slow to ensure that all the goals and targets will be met by 2030. That necessary adaptation to the challenges of implementing the 2030 Agenda is an important step towards initiating a paradigm shift that will bring more coherence, efficiency and visibility to the work of our Organization, even though it is of course the primary duty of each Member State to remain mobilized.

In that regard, Monaco also prioritizes partnerships in its international cooperation given the long-standing evidence. We can achieve our united actions only by leveraging best practices and by constantly reviewing the technical opportunities based on our past experience.

Our cooperation with local non-governmental organizations in partner countries is based on trust and human involvement. The size of our territory has naturally led us to look towards others. Trust in the links established with Monaco's 11 international cooperation partnership countries makes it possible to support exclusively through grants more than 130 projects a year in priority sectors, namely, education, health, food security and socioeconomic integration.

The Principality remains a committed and resolute partner in doing its part to make the new paradigm of sustainable development a reality for all.

Our faith in multilateralism is anchored in the reality of a world of evolving threats. The Principality of Monaco shoulders its responsibility by implementing the principle of one State, one vote enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Monaco is convinced that the United Nations alone remains a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations towards shared goals. The authors of the Charter were visionaries. Like them, we must constantly renew our commitment to saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

In conclusion, allow me to quote Seneca, who said: "It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that they are difficult." Given the proliferation of challenges, let us dare to stand closer together. Even if not everything will be resolved in an easily measurable time frame, let us promote understanding among people and respect for our differences. I would be remiss if I did not reiterate our full trust in Mr. António Guterres and his transformative initiatives, which will make the United Nations better suited and more likely to effectively and efficiently meet the challenges of tomorrow.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Marise Payne, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Ms. Payne (Australia): We are all proud members of this venerable institution. If this place and our membership in it stand for anything, then we stand for an international order based on rules and cooperation. That principle guides our actions, our dealings with each other, and our treatment of collective challenges as they arise before us. Australia recognizes the reality of a world in which the power of great States shapes the international system in which we seek to advance our national interests. That is the grain with which we all work.

We also hold true to the following simple proposition — we will be safer and more prosperous in a world where global differences are managed and global challenges met by agreed rules rather than by the exercise of power alone. Strong global cooperation sets a tone and sets in place rules and norms for constructive diplomacy in every region of the world. That is true even in a period of rapid and accelerating change and of rising nationalism and geopolitical competition. Our most urgent global challenges will not be solved by countries acting alone; solutions begin with collaboration.

In Australia's 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper*, we set out an analysis of the trends that are shaping the world. Most importantly, we set out our policy response. In a very competitive and contested era, Australia is taking responsibility for its own security and prosperity. At home, we are investing in our national resilience and strength, ensuring that our economy is strong and that Australians are safe. We are sovereign and independent. In our region — the Indo-Pacific — we seek a neighbourhood in which the rights of all States are respected, and in which adherence to rules delivers lasting peace. Internationally, we are committed to promoting and protecting the rules and institutions that support stability and prosperity, and enable collective action to meet global challenges.

At this time of change, challenge and opportunity, we representatives of Member States have the honour of preserving and advancing international rules and order so as to deliver on the expectations of our people for a just, fair and secure world. One proof of the necessity of the United Nations is the hard fact that we cannot, with all confidence, rid the world of nuclear weapons — not today or this year.

Given that reality, we must redouble our efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation and to build the international trust and confidence necessary to move towards a world free of nuclear weapons. Our peoples expect us to continue to work towards verifiable nuclear disarmament with sound compliance, safeguards and enforcement regimes. Overwhelmingly, our peoples expect us to prevent further proliferation of nuclear weapons. To do that, we must continue to build on the progress we have made through the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

For that reason, Australia supports the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran's nuclear programme, as long as Iran abides by its commitments. It is in our collective interest that controls on Iran's nuclear programme remain in place. And for that reason, the world watches with anticipation the negotiations between the United States and North Korea, pursuing the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the peninsula, in accordance with United Nations resolutions.

Australia will also continue to fully implement our obligations under Security Council resolutions and maintain our own autonomous sanctions, while awaiting real progress towards denuclearization. In addition, we have most recently witnessed a new pattern of indiscriminate slaughter through the use of chemical weapons, including the weaponization of toxic industrial chemicals such as chlorine. We have collectively agreed that the use of chemical weapons anytime, anywhere and under any circumstances is unjustifiable and unacceptable.

As Member States, we must defend our long-standing prohibition on the use of chemical weapons and be prepared to abide by our collective right and resolve to investigate allegations and to verify compliance with that prohibition. Australia joins those calling for Syria to cease the use of chemicals as weapons. Australia also continues to urge Russia and all nations to reinforce the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons anywhere.

Australia, like the United Nations, is committed to improving humanitarian assistance in fragile settings. I commend the Secretary-General for establishing the United for Gender Parity initiative, and for declaring zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse. Australia is also a robust and strong contributor to the Organization's women and peace and security agenda, first set out in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Australia was one of the first Member States to draw up a national action plan on women and peace and security, and we are continuing work on our next five-year national action plan.

Examples of our work on that issue include a benchmark of a minimum of 15 per cent of female military members deployed on Australian peacekeeping mission teams, which I was proud to support over the past three years in my previous role as Australia's Minister for Defence. Australia also has active training programmes on women and peace and security in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Philippines, where our military is assisting partner forces to deal with counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency challenges.

Australia firmly believes that it is only through the inclusion of women in all aspects of peace and security initiatives, including negotiations, the design of peace processes and the management and enforcement of peace programmes, that lasting and resilient security can be achieved.

Many here will remember my predecessor and friend Julie Bishop's determined and sustained work pursuing accountability for the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH-17. Australia remains resolutely committed to that objective, and we will continue working with our Joint Investigation Team partners to pursue justice for the victims and their loved ones.

In expecting other Member States to abide by international rules, we must also subject ourselves to those same standards and expectations. On 6 March, here in New York, Australia and Timor-Leste signed a new maritime boundaries treaty. The treaty was the successful result of the first-ever compulsory conciliation initiated under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It underscores Australia's commitment to international law and is a testament to the way in which international law, in particular the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, enables countries to resolve disputes peacefully and properly, abiding by the rules. The conciliation process created the space for compromise and negotiation on what I acknowledge was a previously intractable disagreement, and ultimately strengthened bilateral relations.

When Member States work together to uphold international law and the institutions that support it, the benefits accrue to all alike — the powerful and the weak, the large and the small. That is a long-standing principle that all we share, regardless of our culture, language, religion or political system. We are all equal before the law.

Australia particularly welcomes the active engagement of the United Nations in our region, the Indo-Pacific. It is a dynamic region that in recent decades has experienced an economic transformation that is unprecedented in human history. The region's rising prosperity has been built on a strong foundation of stability. Australia is absolutely committed to ensuring that the fundamental principles that have enabled the region's success are maintained.

We are committed to a region in which the rights of all States are respected, where there is respect for international law and other norms, where disputes are resolved peacefully, and where open markets facilitate the free flow of trade, capital and ideas. In order to achieve those outcomes, Australia is strengthening its Indo-Pacific bilateral relations, because they are among our most important in their own right and because strong

bilateral relations help us support our regional goals. Our aid programme is an important mechanism through which we support the aspirations of our neighbours. It is predominately and unashamedly focused on the Indo-Pacific region, and geared to expand opportunities for people, businesses and communities to promote economic growth and further reduce regional poverty.

We work in sectors that drive economic growth and human development, including aid for trade, infrastructure, education and health, and the empowerment of women and girls. And we work in ways that are most effective, including with United Nations resident coordinators, and through the region's political, security and economic architecture.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) sits at the heart of our region. It is the collective voice of South-East Asia. There are good reasons why Australia is ASEAN's longest-standing dialogue partner. We are both committed to driving continued strong regional economic growth, and we share optimism for the future. At the same time, we share a conviction of the need to tackle head-on the security challenges of our region, including the fight against terrorism. As the convener for more than 50 years of the Indo-Pacific's most important diplomatic architecture, particularly the East Asia Summit, ASEAN plays a vital role in the security, stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region. Australia's interests are well served by ASEAN, and our commitment to its continued effectiveness and success is stronger than ever.

That commitment was there for all to see at the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit, held in Sydney in March. The Summit marked a new era in the strategic partnership between ASEAN and Australia. Leaders issued the Sydney Declaration, which comprehensively sets out ASEAN and Australia's shared commitment to working together towards a more secure and prosperous region.

In other key pieces of regional architecture, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum seeks to build upon the growing interdependence of the Asia-Pacific's 21 member economies. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum meeting in Papua New Guinea in November will provide an important opportunity to foster cooperation and economic activity across borders to the mutual benefit of all. I commend Papua New Guinea for the significant work that it has done to host the 2018 forum, and I look forward in particular to a very successful Leaders' Week in Port Moresby later this year.

I also commend our Pacific neighbour, the Republic of Nauru, for its successful hosting of the 49th Pacific Islands Forum in the first week of September. With the theme of "Building a strong Pacific: our islands, our people, our will", the member States, associate members, observers and dialogue partners of the Pacific Islands Forum continued the long tradition of activity, consultation, partnership and policy development on diverse matters such as climate change, economic reform, transport and trade.

Australia is committed to working with States members of the Pacific Islands Forum and United Nations resident coordinators to strengthen resilience to climate change and natural disasters in the Pacific. The United Nations Development Programme is a vital partner in that effort. Australia recognizes that Pacific island countries are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and disaster, and that that problem is a leading priority for the region. The Pacific Islands Forum Boe Declaration, released last month at the meeting by member States, takes a contemporary view of security, inclusive of human and environmental security, and emphasizes the importance of regional cooperation and collaboration in building resilience to disasters and climate change.

In 2018, Australia joined the Human Rights Council for the first time. In the Council Australia works for and seeks to develop a region that promotes accountability and respects international law for the benefit of all — nations and people. Australia has been a strong supporter of the Independent International Fact-finding Mission on Myanmar, and we have been deeply disturbed by its findings. We are working with Myanmar and with ASEAN and regional and international partners to find long-term solutions to that complex crisis, including with Indonesia as co-chairs of the Bali Process and through joint humanitarian efforts in Cox's Bazar. Australia will continue to work with the Myanmar Government and the international community to achieve a long-term and durable resolution of Myanmar's complex problems. After 50 years of isolation and instability, Myanmar is at a critical stage in its democratic and economic transition, and it is in all our interests to ensure that it succeeds. Let us honour the late former Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, by renewing our efforts to see fully and genuinely implemented the recommendations

of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, which he so ably led.

International institutions, and the United Nations in particular, help us to adapt collectively as our world changes around us. But as Secretary-General Guterres noted when he opened the General Assembly earlier this week:

> "[t]rust in global governance is also fragile, as twenty-first-century challenges outpace twentieth-century institutions and mindsets" (*A/73/PV.6, p.1*).

That is why Australia supports the Secretary-General's efforts to reform the United Nations. We need to work together to keep pace with the needs and aspirations of the people we serve. But in order to remain fit for our times, the United Nations must remain true to the founding principles, the universal rights and obligations that we agreed upon when we first came together as Member States. Chief among them is the sovereign equality of all States. Member States must rededicate themselves to the aspirations of the founders of the Organization and take to heart the Charter of the United Nations, so that our world can indeed be a more just, fair and secure place to live.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Kairat Abdrakhmanov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan): This year, as we commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of one of the greatest sons of humankind, the late Nelson Mandela, I would like to begin my statement with a quote of his: "It is so easy to break down and destroy. The heroes are those who make peace and build".

We have approached the seventy-third session of the General Assembly with an increased number of problems compared with last year, including a lack of trust and mutual respect. We find ourselves in a state of profound worldwide crisis that touches every aspect of the life of each and every person in our interconnected and rapidly accelerating world. Millions of people live under the shadow of dreadful wars, such as in Syria, Yemen and many other corners of the globe. Kazakhstan believes that war can never be a lasting solution to any problem.

Based on that conviction and sharing the belief that the only viable solution to the current crisis in Syria is an inclusive and Syrian-led political process, we launched the Astana process to strengthen confidence-building measures among the conflicting parties in Syria.

Our far-reaching commitment is embodied in the 2016 anti-war manifesto, entitled *The World. 21st Century*, by Kazakhstan's President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, who stated in that treatise that the main tool for resolving all disputes between States should be peaceful dialogue and constructive negotiations on the basis of equal responsibility for peace and security, mutual respect and non-interference in domestic affairs. It is a road map for peace, and it calls for the effective use of all tools available — from early warning, conflict prevention, diplomacy and mediation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding to sustainable development.

At a time of crisis, we believe that it is of the utmost importance for the United Nations to stay close to the people around the world and to ensure that no one is left behind. We have to overcome differences and reaffirm our shared commitments to the values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

My country has become a net contributor to peace, security and stability, as well as to economic and social development, not only in our region but far beyond. We have carefully preserved peace and harmony in our multi-ethnic and multireligious society by stressing and enforcing the equality and dignity of every citizen. We have achieved that while also creating an effective economic model — our economy has grown more than 20 times from the day that my country emerged as an independent State.

Looking forward, Kazakhstan has a clear vision for its future development. By 2050, we seek to become one of the top 30 most advanced economies in the world, meeting the highest global standards in terms of economic performance and transparent governance, especially the demanding standards of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

As a new model of economic growth, President Nazarbayev announced his plan in his annual address earlier this year, called "New development opportunities under the fourth industrial revolution". It outlines the path for our country to follow in order to achieve those ambitious goals. That new road map focuses on industrialization, the further development of our resource potential, the use of smart technologies, which provide a chance for a breakthrough in the development of our agricultural industry, increasing the efficiency of transport and logistics infrastructure, relaunching

the financial sector, and strengthening human capital as the basis of modernization.

At the global level President Nazarbayev has put forward the G-Global initiative, an information and technology (ICT) platform aimed at ensuring wide and inclusive dialogue on the need to find common solutions for global economic and financial shortcomings. The platform unites prominent international scientists, entrepreneurs and politicians.

In the regional context, we are committed to further extending our partnership with Central Asian countries and to enhancing our common capability to withstand threats and challenges. Today in Central Asia a new reality has been formed. We consider the political, economic and cultural potential of the region to be a common resource, the most rational and effective use of which is achievable only in a collective format.

Our shared goal is to create a model for a zone of peace, security, trust, development and cooperation in our region of Central Asia and beyond. Several features of such a zone are already in place, as exemplified by the Cooperation Council of Turkic-speaking States, the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea and the latest Summit of that Fund, which demonstrated strong political collaboration among regional leaders on subjects including the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia and other mechanisms.

Being the first country from the region to be represented on the Security Council, we have deepened our focus on the situation in Afghanistan with its full implications and threats in the broader regional context. Moreover, Kazakhstan has for many years contributed significantly to peace in and the rehabilitation of that country. We believe that the revival of that country as a prosperous and peaceful neighbour will have a positive impact on overall security in our region. A special role in that process should be played by Afghan women.

In order to increase international awareness and support for the needs of Afghan women and girls, we hosted the Regional Conference on Empowering Women in Afghanistan in September in Astana. It was attended by female politicians, parliamentarians, entrepreneurs and civil-society members from Afghanistan and the Eurasian region. The event gave great impetus to strengthening the role of women, not only in Afghanistan but in the whole region of Central Asia, thereby helping to improve their lives and influence their futures.

New globalization trends have revealed cross-border threats and challenges, which requires a new paradigm to address them. Those transnational challenges are specific, but common to particular regions, especially conflict-prone ones, and they necessitate a transition from a country-specific to a regional strategy to tackle them. A regional strategy becomes effective with the whole-of-system coordination of the activities of United Nations structures region-wide.

As a pilot case, we offer the establishment of a United Nations regional hub for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Almaty, our southern capital. The city already hosts more than a dozen United Nations offices with regional, subregional and multi-country mandates. That solid United Nations field presence has successfully promoted the SDGs in our region for years, and I am happy to announce that, as a host country, we will provide those offices with a state-of-the-art, fully equipped and furnished building, specifically designated and designed as per United Nations and international requirements, by the end of the year.

As an example of regional cooperation, I would also like to outline the results of the Caspian Summit held a month ago in the city of Aktau, in western Kazakhstan. We all are extremely satisfied and proud that the long-awaited legal status of the Caspian Sea has been agreed on and determined by the five littoral countries. The treaty creates a solid legal basis for further comprehensive interaction among all the Caspian States, strengthening regional security and stability, as well as the efficient use of sea resources. I would like to emphasize that the Caspian Sea has become an area of peace, harmony, good-neighbourliness and enhanced international cooperation.

Today, the ability of countries to show global leadership and responsibility is being challenged by numerous threats — from the spread of both conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), terrorism, extremism, organized crime and all forms of trafficking, to food, water, energy and health insecurity the violation of human rights, particularly the rights of women, youth and children, which degrades human dignity, and the lack of respect and justice for all.

Kazakhstan is trying its best to stay in the vanguard of efforts to tackle those international challenges and to seek innovative solutions to them. We fully support the efforts of the Secretary-General to implement his

reforms of the peace and security architecture and the United Nations development system and management. We will contribute to improving shared responsibility for, transparency and the overall coordination of all United Nations bodies with a view to achieving those goals. We are engaged in reforming the methods of work of the Security Council so as to enhance its relevance, transparency, accountability and effective capacity to respond speedily to varying crises.

Kazakhstan remains committed to strengthening peacekeeping by ensuring clear and achievable mandates, highly qualified personnel and adequate resources. We will increase our contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations through innovative forms of partnerships, including co-deployment. We will deploy a unit and additional officers to United Nations peacekeeping missions during this seventy-third session and expand their number in future.

Being fully supportive of the concept of preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention and confidence-building, the President of Kazakhstan initiated the creation of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, as well as the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia, which comprises 27 countries, spanning from the Middle to the Far East and South-East Asia.

My country has proved itself to be a moral leader in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, after having renounced the world's fourth-largest nuclear arsenal and the world's largest nuclear test site, in Semipalatinsk. We call upon all other countries to follow our example, as nuclear weapons do not ensure either real power or true protection. Protection comes from trust in the international community.

Kazakhstan signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 2 March, following its engaged participation in the elaboration and adoption of the Treaty. We are now processing its ratification. The early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty remains a key goal for us. Our country, one of the most impacted by the harmful consequences of nuclear tests, is making great efforts to bring the world to global zero. We therefore sponsored resolution 64/35, which established the International Day against Nuclear Tests. Three weeks ago, the States Members of the United Nations commemorated the ninth observance of the Day, with the General Assembly firmly supporting an urgent and complete end to all nuclear testing.

The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones remains one of the most effective measures for combating the spread of WMDs. With that in mind, President Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed strengthening cooperation among nuclear-weapon-free zones and convening inter-zone conferences on a regular basis. Astana proposes hosting the first such meeting.

We have also steadfastly advocated for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and call on all the parties involved to agree on mutually acceptable conditions to sustain the negotiation process. We also support preserving and ensuring the proper implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action for Iran, as well as a thorough investigation of chemical-weapons crimes in Syria and the prevention of chemical terrorism.

Countering terrorism is of special significance for my country. Kazakhstan has ratified 16 of the 19 United Nations instruments on combating terrorism, with measures taken for the early accession to the remaining three treaties. Stronger global leadership in fighting terrorism remains crucial. We must do more to address the roots of radicalization, using best practices and relevant United Nations instruments.

We are actively working under the Joint Plan of Action for the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia. Having contributed $300,000, Kazakhstan has become the first donor to its third phase, and we thank other donors too.

In his address to the General Assembly in 2015 (see A/70/PV.13), President Nazarbayev put forward several counter-terrorism initiatives: the creation of a global counter-terrorism coalition or network and the adoption of a comprehensive United Nations document on combating terrorism. In that context, our country has offered the Code of Conduct towards Achieving a World Free of Terrorism and invites all countries to closely coordinate in the fight against that evil. We commend all our partners for their support. The Code signing ceremony was held earlier this afternoon at a special high-level event, with more than 70 Member States having endorsed the document, for which we are very grateful. The Code remains open for signature by other States, and we invite them all to manifest their goodwill in fighting that disastrous phenomenon.

Our strong conviction is that comprehensive success in the area of hard security is impossible without

success in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. We have launched a number of initiatives to implement the SDGs: the renowned international Expo 2017 exhibition on the theme of future energy; the Post-Expo International Centre for Green Technologies and Investment Projects; the Astana International Financial Centre; the annual Astana Economic Forum; the KazAID development agency; the Regional Hub of the Civil Service; the Regional Centre for Disaster Risk Reduction; and the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre for combating illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors. All those and many other projects have many promising prospects for the future.

Kazakhstan is the world's largest landlocked country, and it is also a part of the biggest landlocked region of Central Asia and Afghanistan, and the farthest away from any ocean. It has made many strides in achieving connectivity and in turning what can be termed "landlockedness" into "landlinkedness".

Based on the outcomes of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and working together to fulfil the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action for the landlocked least developed countries (LLDCs), we are working to further expand communications, enhance infrastructure, boost trade and transit, counter climate change and improve energy security. Recently, we hosted the LLDCs' Ministerial Meeting on Trade and Trade Facilitation in Astana.

We are ready to share our experiences in promoting the goals of our large-scale third modernization programme, geared towards joining the top 30 most developed nations, and we offer our assistance to developing countries. In that context, South-South cooperation is gaining importance for us. Together with the United Nations system and other partners we will continue to extend assistance to African countries. We will work under the Africa-Kazakhstan partnership for the SDGs, and we will continue to work with small island developing States.

The recent establishment of the Islamic Organization for Food Security in Astana will contribute to humanitarian assistance efforts through the creation of food reserves. Also, a new initiative of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in the area of science and technology will serve the purpose of narrowing the digital and ICT gap between the developed and the developing countries.

Mr. Ten-Pow (Guyana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Kazakhstan's hallmarks, among many others, are pluralism and interfaith accord. They are promoted through an unprecedented dialogue platform, namely, the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Astana. The sixth Congress of that kind will take place next month in Astana. Its added value is that it brings together religious and political leaders, international organizations and civil society and turns the paradigm of conflict and clashes of cultures and religions into a unique model of tolerance and harmony. President Nazarbayev has unveiled a new programme of spiritual modernization of Kazakh society called "spiritual enlightenment", which blends traditional with contemporary elements. I can convey the essence of the initiative by recalling his words that in dreaming of our great future, we should not forget about our worthy past.

Before I conclude, I reiterate that it is only through our collective will and solidarity that we can turn this world in crisis into a world of hope and promise. The United Nations should stay open and relevant to all people, since it is our common responsibility to leave a strengthened and well-used heritage to move towards peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies where no one is left behind.

In conclusion I want to refer again to the words of Nelson Mandela, namely, that it is in our hands to create a better world for all who live in it. We need to turn our goodwill and good words into good actions. That is what we desperately need today. The President of Kazakhstan, His Excellency Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev, clearly stated that the time to look ahead is now; the time for action is now; the time to show our will is now; and the time to make a difference is now.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Kyaw Tint Swe, Union Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor of Myanmar.

Mr. Kyaw Tint Swe (Myanmar): We live in challenging times. This year's theme, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", is therefore most appropriate. It serves to remind us of the need to strengthen the role of this important Organization if we wish to overcome the complex challenges we face today. In that process, we must not forget the core principles of the Charter

of the United Nations, including the principle of sovereign equality. It is also important to remember that the promotion of economic, social, cultural and humanitarian interests, as well as the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, can be attained only through international cooperation. Furthermore, we should not forget the international character of the United Nations.

It is only through constructive and peaceful approaches that we will be able to create a better United Nations — one that is relevant to all nations. Only then can our hopes for global leadership with shared responsibilities become a reality. Here I wish to stress that Myanmar's view on the role of the United Nations remains unchanged. There is no suitable multilateral platform other than the United Nations where countries can work together to find solutions to overcome global challenges.

Let me apprise the Assembly of our efforts to transform Myanmar from an authoritarian system into a democratic one and of our efforts to bring about sustainable development and build a society where stability, peace and harmony prevail. A country without peace and stability cannot achieve economic development. Of that we are convinced. Accordingly, our democratically elected Government has given priority to national reconciliation and peace since we assumed office.

We are convinced that ethnic strife and armed conflicts in Myanmar can be ended only through political means. Lasting peace will become a reality only when the democratic federal union to which our people have aspired is established. We are therefore conducting negotiations at the Union Peace Conference to reach agreement on the fundamental principles for a democratic federal union. The three sessions of the conference held so far have resulted in the adoption of 51 fundamental principles that will become part of the Union Peace Accord. To ensure that the process is inclusive, we have continued negotiations not only with the eight ethnic armed groups that have signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement but also with those that have yet to come on board.

During the past year, two more ethnic armed groups, namely, the New Mon State Party and the Lahu Democratic Union, joined the peace process by signing the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. We will continue our endeavours to bring all ethnic armed organizations under the umbrella of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement and to the conference table.

Essential to our endeavours to bring peace and prosperity to the nation is the need to ensure balanced development in the economic, social and environmental spheres. To that end, the Government has adopted the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan 2018–2030, which is in accord with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Among its important goals are peace, national reconciliation, security and good governance. The success of the Plan requires not only national endeavours but also the involvement and commitment of development partners and international organizations.

Human rights and inclusiveness are fundamental to the successful transformation of Myanmar into a democratic society. The Government has spared no effort to nurture democratic norms and practices among all its citizens. Those efforts include the promotion of the rule of law, good governance and the protection of human rights, and the fostering of civil society. All those elements are essential for the emergence of a democratic federal union in which the security and prosperity of all citizens are ensured. It is a supremely challenging task, particularly for a fledgling democracy. However, Myanmar is strong in its resolution to build the democratic society to which our people aspire.

Resolving the issue in Rakhine state is an important component of our democratic process. Our Government has consistently exerted all possible efforts to bring peace and development to Rakhine. Within weeks of assuming the responsibilities of governing, the Government set up the Central Committee for the Implementation of Peace, Stability and Development in Rakhine state in May 2016 under the chairmanship of the State Counsellor, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. That was followed by the establishment of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State in September 2016, headed by the late Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, to provide recommendations for bringing peace, stability and development to Rakhine state.

I wish at this point to pay tribute to Kofi Annan, who with his immense wisdom provided us with recommendations in his desire for us to reach our goal of peace, prosperity and security.

Barely a month after the Advisory Commission was established, an extremist terrorist group, called Aga Mul Mujahidin — later renamed the Arakan Rohingya

Salvation Army — launched attacks on three border police posts in northern Rakhine state. The attacks were premeditated, well organized and designed to invoke fear among the inhabitants, as well as to incite violence and attract international attention.

The Government, despite the attacks, continued with its efforts to seek sustainable solutions for Rakhine state. The Advisory Commission presented its final report to the Government of Myanmar in August 2017. It contains 88 recommendations towards achieving lasting peace and stability in Rakhine. We have set up an implementation committee, and I am happy to report that we are now implementing 81 out of the 88 recommendations made by the Commission.

Within hours of the release of the Advisory Commission's final report, Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army terrorists carried out simultaneous attacks on 30 police outposts and one army battalion headquarters. Here, it must be stressed that the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army attacks of 2017 were not only against the security forces but also against various communities inhabiting Rakhine state. The attacks opened a chapter of fear and instability that led to a large outflow of refugees to Bangladesh. International attention has been focused on the outflow but has overlooked the broader picture of the various reasons — immediate as well as long-standing — that brought about the displacement of those people. Nevertheless, the Government has persisted in its sincere efforts to address as a whole the need for stability, reconciliation and the development of all communities in Rakhine.

We deeply sympathize with these displaced persons, especially the women and children, and have taken steps to effect the early repatriation of all displaced persons from Rakhine who are verified as residents of the State. To that end, we have signed three bilateral agreements with Bangladesh. In line with these bilateral agreements, the necessary preparations have been made, and we have been ready to receive verified returnees from Bangladesh since 23 January. We call on Bangladesh to fulfil its commitments in accordance with these bilateral agreements so as to allow without delay the return of verified persons under voluntary, safe and dignified conditions. A number of people have returned of their own volition, having made their own arrangements. They have been systematically registered and processed and are now with their relatives and families in their own homes. However, not even a single displaced person has been repatriated by Bangladesh as part of the implementation of the bilateral agreement. The only way to resolve the issue swiftly and peacefully is through the implementation of bilateral agreements, working together in the spirit of good-neighbourliness and refraining from activities that might be inimical to the national interests of either Myanmar or Bangladesh.

We recognize the crucial role of the United Nations in addressing the issue of Rakhine. Accordingly, the Government of Myanmar signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Development Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees with a view to assisting the speedy and efficient resettlement and rehabilitation of returnees. The United Nations team has started this process, and we are looking forward to its feedback.

The Myanmar Government has expressed its serious concerns over the report of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar published by the Human Rights Council on 12 September (A/HRC/39/64). Due to our Government's serious and genuine concerns about the advisability of fact-finding mission's establishment, composition and mandate, Myanmar objected to the mission's creation from the very beginning, At a time when we are working hard to build harmony on the ground, we are concerned that the release of the report, which is based on narratives and not on hard evidence — a point which I energetically emphasize — will serve only to further inflame tensions and could potentially hinder our efforts to create the much-needed social cohesion in Rakhine. In this regard, I would like to stress what accountability should mean to all of us. Accountability should mean taking responsibility for one's actions. Accountability must apply equally to all. Individuals, organizations and national Governments — as well as multilateral organizations — must be held responsible for the consequences of their words and actions.

As the Assembly will also be aware, the Government of Myanmar has resolutely rejected the International Criminal Court's 6 September ruling in connection with Rakhine state. Our position in this regard is clear: Myanmar is not a party to the Rome Statute, and the Court has no jurisdiction whatsoever over my country. The Court's decision was made on dubious legal grounds and applied to a situation where domestic remedies had not yet been exhausted. I speak to all delegations today when I say that we, the members of the international community, should be deeply concerned by the recent decision of the International Criminal Court and the

various precedents that the Court may be setting by this ruling, as well as by the way in which it was made. Such action can only erode the moral and legal authority of the Court. We are heartened that we are not alone in having grave misgivings about the Court. I would also like to make it clear that, while the Government is unable to accept this legally dubious intervention by the International Criminal Court, we are fully committed to ensuring accountability where there is concrete evidence of human rights violations committed in Rakhine state.

We have recently established an independent commission of inquiry that will investigate all violations of human rights and atrocities committed in Rakhine state as part of our efforts to address the issues of accountability, reconciliation, peace, stability and development in our country. The Commission is chaired by Ms. Rosario Manalo, former Deputy Foreign Minister of the Philippines, and comprises Ambassador Kenzo Oshima, former Japanese Permanent Representative to the United Nations and Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, and two Myanmar nationals, one of whom is a former Chairman of the Constitutional Tribunal and the other a former senior official of the United Nations Children's Fund. We hope that, alongside the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, the work of the independent commission of inquiry will become an important guiding light for the resolution of problems in Rakhine state.

The challenges facing Myanmar are complex and multifaceted. However, the people of Myanmar are resilient. We stand united to face all obstacles and to meet all challenges as we strive to bring peace, development and national harmony to our country, which has suffered from decades of conflict, underdevelopment and disharmony.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iceland.

Mr. Thórdarson (Iceland): The United Nations has played a critical role in promoting peace and development for all. Most indices measuring human development tell a positive story — a story of our shared success. It is a story we should tell more often.

Technological advances and social and economic progress that we never envisioned have become a reality, which gives us hope that humankind can once again prove that no challenge is too big to overcome and that we are right to dream big. But dreams will come true only with hard work and determination. And our common goals will be achieved only through international cooperation and by significantly accelerating the pace of progress. The United Nations is the most important platform we have for this vital cooperation.

Iceland is a small country with high ambitions. A gender-equal world is one of those ambitions. We have a solid record as one of the most gender-equal countries in the world, which could only happened through the hard work of women pioneers who changed our politics and our law to empower all women in Iceland, and, of course, with the cooperation of a few good men. Even though more needs to be done at home, we stand ready to share our experience with other States. Gender equality is a master key to unlocking sustainable development in all countries, in line with the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Another goal of ours is to make sure that future generations will thank us — all of us —for having worked hard to save them from the worst consequences of climate change. Given its location in the Arctic, Iceland sits in the front row as a witness to disappearing ice caps and environmental change. In the drier parts of the globe, desertification continues and causes serious challenges to people's livelihoods. There is no doubt in my mind that climate change is fast becoming the single most serious challenge to global peace, security and development. While technology will be a big part of the solution — with electric cars, and with renewable energy fuelling our economies — we will also need to nurture our soil and restore our land as key parts of our efforts aimed at fighting climate change. This perspective is reflected in the ambitious new climate strategy of the Government of Iceland, which has been put in place to meet our Paris Agreement targets for 2030 and to make Iceland carbon-neutral by 2040. Already, all electricity and heating in Iceland is produced from renewable resources. Our plan aims to phase out fossil fuels in transport and increase afforestation and the restoration of wetlands.

We have joined a coalition of other countries that have already put such plans in place because, again, the only way forward is through cooperation. High-income countries must do their share to reduce emissions and help low-income countries adapt to the effects of climate change. In the end, our reaction to climate change has more to do with self-preservation than self-sacrifice.

Sustainable development, with particular emphasis on the oceans, climate and energy, and social and economic development will be among the guiding principles of Iceland's chairmanship of the Arctic Council from 2019 to 2021. The Council has shown remarkable leadership in promoting sustainable development and practical cooperation in the high north and could be used as a model for other regions of the world, as local actions can drive global change.

Iceland is firmly committed to the 2030 Agenda, with its inclusive and bottom-up approach to development. It is a key policy priority for our Government and features strong ownership and participation by both the private sector and civil society. We look forward to the upcoming Iceland voluntary national review in 2019 and are hoping for constructive feedback that will encourage us to do better.

Healthy oceans and sustainable fisheries will remain at the core of Iceland's foreign policy. To reach our goal on healthy oceans, all nations must join hands. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and its implementing agreements provide a tried and tested framework for the work ahead. Through our experience, we have learned that the most effective approach to conservation and sustainable use of marine resources is the regional approach. This should also be the main approach in the new "biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction" implementing agreement currently being negotiated.

In the field of marine-resource management, we stand ready to share our expertise with others. The same applies to gender equality, green energy and land restoration, all of which are a part of the United Nations training programmes in Iceland. Almost 5,000 experts from 100 countries have been trained since the first programme was established almost 40 years ago. This has been made possible because the knowledge was fostered by Icelandic institutions and private companies, not least within the fishery and energy sectors. Development, trade and business can and should go hand in glove in implementing the 2030 Agenda, and we are pleased to note that the United Nations is taking concrete steps to make such partnerships stronger and to bring energy, innovation and know-how into national and global efforts.

In the past few decades we have also seen incredible advances in medicine. These advances have enabled us to live longer despite increasingly unhealthy lifestyles. Yesterday, we vowed to actively cooperate in the prevention of non-communicable diseases and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. One neglected issue is neurological disorders, including spinal-cord injuries, which affect a billion people worldwide. The Nordic countries are working towards a common resource database on neurological disorders to facilitate medical advances in this area. We encourage others to do the same, as, yet again, cooperation will be key to success.

Earlier this year, Iceland took a seat on the Human Rights Council for the first time. It was a proud moment for us, to join the Council, as it came at a time when Iceland is celebrating 100 years of sovereignty and the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We believe that human rights express the core purpose of the United Nations. Advancing the dignity and equality of all human beings must be our fundamental goal. Only in that way can we attain peace, security and sustainable development for all societies. We firmly believe that upholding human rights is in the interest of every State.

The Human Rights Council should be the standard bearer for respecting, protecting and promoting human rights around the globe. Its Member States must be willing to improve human rights in their own backyards, so that our criticism does not fall on deaf ears. We will strive to improve the Human Rights Council through dialogue and cooperation.

Our priorities also revolve around promoting women's human rights, safeguarding our children's rights and upholding freedom from violence. We will work to advance the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, and, lastly, focus on the connection between climate change and human rights.

Iceland's history emphasizes that the prosperity and well-being of nations is, to a large extent, dependent upon protecting and promoting the rights of our citizens, including civil, political, economic and cultural rights. As a part of our commitment to human rights, Iceland's new development cooperation strategy will incorporate an approach based on human rights, which means that further steps will now be taken to ensure that our development strategies and projects are formulated, implemented and evaluated with human rights at the forefront of our considerations.

It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. The United Nations is the heart of

international cooperation but, in order to reach our common goals, a more efficient and effective United Nations is called for. Iceland strongly supports the Secretary-General's reform agenda aimed at making the Organization, which was created in a different era, fit to meet the challenges of and take advantage of the opportunities offered by the twenty-first century. We should continue to seek ways to reform the Security Council, its working methods and membership. It should not be held hostage to narrow national interests when our house is on fire. We need to show more unity. Despite the progress that we have made in every area, difficult conflicts remain to be resolved. Even today, in 2018, we are witnessing the use of chemical weapons, ethnic cleansing, war crimes, forced migration and other horrors, which should be echoes from a distant past, not everyday news.

The Syrian war has left the country in ruins, with more than 400,000 people dead and almost half the population displaced. A political solution continues to be the only viable path towards achieving peace. In Yemen, we are witnessing a conflict that is fast becoming the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, and there seems to be no end in sight, as regional powerhouses continue to fuel the fires of war. The issue of Western Sahara remains unresolved, and the same applies to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The disregard for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and Georgia remains a wound in the European security architecture. We are seeing mounting challenges in Venezuela and continue to receive reports of the horrors committed against the Rohingya population in Myanmar.

We must act and make full use of the tools available to hold those responsible to account, including before the International Criminal Court. All these conflicts become even more disconcerting when we consider that almost 250 million children are affected, which is casting a long shadow on their future. These conflict-stricken areas and other emergencies are also the drivers of the greatest refugee crisis since the end of the Second World War and call for a coordinated response, upon which we hope the global compact on refugees will be able to deliver.

The multilateral system — the very foundation of prosperity and peace — is under strain from new and challenging political agendas in which simple answers are provided to complex questions, favouring strongman politics over diplomacy, free trade, democracy and human rights. We need to stand by our convictions and principles both at home and abroad, while addressing some of the legitimate grievances of our citizens. Iceland has been increasing its contributions to United Nations programmes and funds. We will continue to support the United Nations and stand by its founding values and principles.

On 1 December, Iceland will mark the centenary of its independence and sovereignty. This period has been characterized by rapid economic growth and social development. It has given birth to a society that scores high on almost all development indices. One might be tempted to say that this success was all our own making and good luck, but that would be far from the truth. The bedrock of our independence and success has been the international rules-based order with its open markets, free trade, multilateral institutions, liberal democracy and international cooperation. This foundation should never be taken for granted, and it falls to us — the States Members of the United Nations — to ensure that future generations can enjoy the same benefits.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Elmar Maharram oglu Mammadyarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Mammadyarov (Azerbaijan): I am pleased to begin my statement by congratulating Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly, as the fourth-ever woman elected to this position of great responsibility, and wish her every success in discharging her important duties. Ms. Espinosa Garcés may count on the full support of Azerbaijan during her tenure.

We are also grateful to His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for his outstanding work in presiding over the Assembly at its seventy-second session. I express my profound respect for and gratitude to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, for his dedicated leadership and efforts aimed at improving the efficiency of the Organization. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to former Secretary-General Kofi Annan — a man of peace. His legacy will remain a true inspiration for all of us.

The theme of this year's general debate is very timely and embodies those issues of utmost significance for all of us. We live in a globalized world where the interactions among people from different countries are growing in intensity as they become increasingly extensive. Azerbaijan fully supports the Secretary-General's determination to genuinely contribute to

preventing wars and sustaining peace, as well as his efforts aimed at responding to conflicts and crises in an early and effective manner, assisting Member States in their endeavours to sustain peace and build resilient and prosperous societies, making the United Nations more coherent, integrated, effective and efficient.

As we embark upon a path of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we need to regularly ask ourselves to what extent we are delivering on our commitments. Coordinated efforts and shared responsibilities among States, backed by adequate resources, are essential to securing a sustainable future and ensuring that no one is left behind.

In adopting its national development strategy, Azerbaijan has taken into account the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and continues to implement large-scale programmes for improving good governance, ensuring sustainable growth, strengthening the rule of law, promoting respect for human rights, facilitating access to public services and providing for inclusive societies.

We are consistent in our efforts aimed at improving the living conditions of our citizens. The poverty rate in the country is 5.4 per cent, while the unemployment rate is 5 per cent. The Davos World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report for 2017-2018 ranked Azerbaijan 35 out of 137 countries with respect to competitiveness. Among the developing countries, the World Economic Forum ranked Azerbaijan third on its 2018 Inclusive Development Index.

Azerbaijan contributes to regional development efforts through promoting connectivity. It plays an important role in bringing continents together and creating a platform for mutually beneficial collaboration. The East-West transportation corridor, which was inaugurated in October 2017, is a transportation corridor that saves at least two weeks of time in transporting goods from Asia to Europe or the reverse. Other important projects include the South-North and South-West corridors, which, thanks to our efforts combined with those of neighbouring countries, have become a reality. Azerbaijan invests substantially in those corridors and is an active participant in both initiatives.

The first phase of the construction of the Baku International Sea Trade Port complex was begun in May. The handling capacity of the port will be 15 million tons of cargo per year, with the possibility of increasing it to 25 million tons in time. Azerbaijan has also initiated a transnational broadband project, namely, the Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway, which aims to build a transnational fibre-optic line between Hong Kong and Frankfurt. It will be the shortest connecting line between East and West, in an era of competition where every single second counts.

Today, Azerbaijan is providing the world with its own development model, backed by internal stability, civil unity, solidarity in society and an environment of peace and tolerance among the various peoples and religions living together in a liberal, sustainable and dynamic economy. Inspired by its achievements in economic development, successful social policy, rich human capital and traditional values of multiculturalism, Azerbaijan decided to nominate its capital, the city of Baku, to host the World Expo 2025. Our theme — "Developing human capital, building a better future" — is of universal interest and has a particular significance for Azerbaijan. It is also fully aligned with the international development agenda, in particular, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The region that encompasses Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and the Caspian has never hosted a World Expo. Accordingly, World Expo 2025 Baku will be truly universal in the way it goes beyond traditional geography and presents a vivid example of a country achieving remarkable results within a historically short period of time — it has only been 27 years since Azerbaijan's independence — and proposing to host an event of the scale of World Expo. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to kindly ask States members of the International Exhibitions Bureau to vote for Baku at this year's elections, which are to be held in Paris on 23 November.

Sustainable economic growth has enabled Azerbaijan not only to focus on its national development strategy, but also to actively support international development efforts. Azerbaijan has provided international humanitarian and development assistance to a number of countries through the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and the Azerbaijan International Development Agency under the auspices of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Particular attention has been paid to addressing the needs of the developing and least-developed countries, as well as those recovering from natural disasters.

As we celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights this year, we reaffirm our commitment to strengthening democracy and protecting human rights as top priorities for the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Government is implementing large-scale programmes so as to create the necessary conditions for all the citizens of Azerbaijan to fully enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Education is a top priority in our domestic policy because a well-established and educated society is a guarantee of successful and sustainable development.

The right to health is fully ensured in Azerbaijan. Every year, more than 5 million people — half the country's population — undergo medical check-ups that are fully subsidized by funds from the State budget. Azerbaijan was the first country in the Muslim world to grant women the right to vote, as early as 1918. Azerbaijan strives to ensure gender equality and empower women in public and social life. It is also worth noting that, as we live in a digital age, currently about 80 per cent of the country's population has unimpeded access to the Internet, which has become the most favoured and practical vehicle for information, media, communications and the free flow of ideas and thoughts.

Combating corruption lies at the heart of SDG implementation in Azerbaijan. The implementation of innovative approaches and technological innovations has enabled Azerbaijan to make significant progress in curbing corruption in the public sector. Earlier this year, the Human Rights Council unanimously adopted resolution 37/7, on promoting human rights and the SDGs through the transparent, accountable and efficient delivery of public services, which was introduced by Azerbaijan and aims to promote the Azerbaijan Service and Assessment Network brand concept of public service.

In early May, Azerbaijan successfully presented its periodic report within the framework of the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review. We remain committed to enhancing dialogue and interaction with other United Nations human rights mechanisms, based on mutual respect and understanding.

Azerbaijan is one of the world's recognized centres of multiculturalism. All ethnic and religious groups living in Azerbaijan coexist in peace and harmony. We have hosted numerous international events aimed at strengthening intercultural dialogue. As a member of both the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Council of Europe, Azerbaijan launched, in 2008, the Baku Process, whose main goal is to strengthen dialogue, partnership and cooperation between the Muslim world and Europe. Implemented under the patronage of the Azerbaijani leadership, the Baku Process provides a large-scale platform for the exchange of knowledge through interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

In his most recent report on the promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace (A/72/488), the Secretary-General specifically mentions the important role being played by the Baku Process in advocating dialogue among cultures. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Baku Process, and a series of events will be organized on this occasion, including the sixth high-level Humanitarian Forum, to be held from 25 to 26 October in Baku.

From this rostrum, I am pleased to announce that Azerbaijan will assume the chairmanship of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries next year. Throughout its history, the Non-Aligned Movement has played a fundamental role in strengthening international peace and security by promoting adherence to the principles adopted at the Bandung Conference. The chairmanship of Azerbaijan will provide further impetus for advancing the founding principles of the Movement, the sixty-fifth anniversary of which will be celebrated in 2020.

Unresolved armed conflicts, existing and emerging security challenges and related humanitarian crises threaten to reverse much of the development progress made. The ongoing armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan continues to represent a major threat to international and regional peace and security. The conflict has resulted in the occupation of one fifth of the territory of Azerbaijan and has turned approximately one out of every nine persons in the country into an internally displaced person or refugee.

Since the very first day of the conflict, combat operations have been conducted exclusively inside the territory of Azerbaijan — virtually in the middle of the country — affecting its civilian population and infrastructure. In its resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), the Security Council acknowledged the fact that military force was used against Azerbaijan, that such actions are unlawful and

in contradiction with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and that they constitute an obvious violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. Numerous decisions and documents adopted by other authoritative international organizations have been framed along the same lines.

However, the Security Council's key demands, including, first of all, the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, have yet to be implemented. On the contrary, Armenia's policy and practices clearly demonstrate its intention to secure the annexation of Azerbaijani territories it captured through military force and in which it has carried out ethnic cleansing on a massive scale.

Initially, after changes in the Government of Armenia, there were some expectations that the new leadership would uphold democratic values and the norms and principles of international law, including the relevant resolutions and decisions of international organizations, particularly those adopted by the Security Council. Unfortunately, so far no progress has been observed in that regard.

Contrary to his earlier statements, the Prime Minister of Armenia now does not even shy away from overtly attempting to regard the Nagorno Karabakh region of Azerbaijan as part of Armenia. Such an annexationist claim not only shows utter disrespect for the norms and principles of international law and the resolutions adopted by the Security Council, but also undermines the peace process mediated by the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and its Chairs. Therefore, at the highest political level, Armenia demonstrates that its real intentions are not the settlement of the conflict through negotiations, but the continuation of the illegal occupation of the Azerbaijani territories.

There are continual internal political developments in Armenia of an unstable nature, with no understanding by the international community of what is going on in there. That is why we cannot and will not rule out the notion that the latest statements and actions of the Armenian Prime Minister are aimed at further escalating the situation on the ground and provoking armed hostilities along the line of contact and on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. But one thing is clear: full responsibility for the consequences of this negative scenario will lie entirely with the Republic of Armenia. We therefore call upon the international community to send a strong message to and exert pressure on Armenia to ensure its full compliance with international law and to immediately and unconditionally start implementing the relevant Security Council resolutions adopted with regard to the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict.

Armenia has consistently obstructed the conflict-settlement process and, at the same time, refuses to conduct results-oriented negotiations and regularly resorts to various provocations designed to escalate the situation on the ground. Armenia is trying to consolidate its occupation of the seized territories by changing their demographic, cultural and physical character and preventing the hundreds of thousands of forcibly displaced Azerbaijanis from returning to their homes. In flagrant violation of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, Armenia continues to implement its policy of illegally settling Armenians, particularly those from Syria, in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

Armenia's new leadership should understand that their promises to the Armenian people to make Armenia an economically developed and prosperous State cannot be possible without peace, good-neighbourly relations and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its neighbours. The earlier Armenia puts aside its territorial claims and withdraws troops from the territories of Azerbaijan, the sooner peace can come to our region and the sooner prospects for Armenia's development will improve.

There is now much talk of democracy and the Armenians of the Nagorno Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. But what about the Azerbaijani population of Nagorno Karabakh and the Azerbaijanis from the seven surrounding districts who were subjected to brutal ethnic cleansing and forced to leave their places of origin, homes and property? If the new Armenian leadership is calling itself democracy, then they have to act in accordance with the rule of law and democratic values. It must let those uprooted people return to their homes, and it must withdraw its armed forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, as demanded by relevant resolutions of the Security Council and other international organizations.

Azerbaijan sincerely believes that there is no alternative to peace, stability and mutually beneficial regional cooperation, and is the most interested party in the earliest possible political settlement of the conflict. At the same time, no settlement of the conflict can be

reached if it violates the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and is inconsistent with international law. The resolution of the conflict is possible only on the basis of the respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mahamat Zene Cherif, Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration and International Cooperation of the Republic of Chad.

Mr. Cherif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, permit me to convey, on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad and Head of State, the Chadian delegation's warmest congratulations and best wishes for success to Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her successful election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. Chad assures her of our support as she strives to fulfil her noble mission.

We would also like to express our sincere thanks and great appreciation to her predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, for the quality of the work conducted and the convincing results achieved during his term. On behalf of Chad, I would also like to recognize the leadership of Secretary-General António Guterres and thank him for his continued commitment to strengthening the role of the United Nations and promoting its partnership with regional organizations, particularly the African Union.

Chad welcomes the relevance of the President's strategic vision for this session, "Dialogue and strengthening of multilateralism as a catalyst for the well-being of all persons and a sustainable planet". The choice of this theme is justified in many ways. We live in a world experiencing perpetual change where we are confronted with the serious consequences of climate change, conflicts and crises, underdevelopment, unprecedented migratory flows, nationalism and isolationism.

In a world so deeply troubled and exposed to such diverse and grave perils, humankind has no choice but to further unite around the shared universal values underpinning the establishment of the United Nations, a melting pot of nations and peoples of the world aspiring to live together in peace, mutual respect, solidarity, complementarity and a common destiny. Our future, as well as that of generations to come for whom we are responsible, depend on it.

More than anywhere else, Africa in general and the countries of the Sahel in particular are experiencing the combined negative effects of all these aforementioned scourges. My country, Chad, surrounded by hotbeds of conflict and crisis and in a region characterized by burgeoning terrorism, illicit trafficking of all kinds — including human trafficking related to illegal immigration — transnational crime, drought and desertification, is deeply affected.

On the basis of the firm conviction that there can be no development, peace or stability without security, Chad, despite its meagre resources, has been obliged to engage on several fronts in the fight against terrorism, across the Lake Chad basin and the Sahel. Despite the immense sacrifices made both individually and collectively with the countries of the subregion, the terrorist threat remains present and persistent and jeopardizes all our development efforts.

Terrorist groups linked to vast criminal networks of all kinds of heavily armed and wealthy traffickers continue to test our individual response capabilities. This does not begin to cover the efforts required to address other security challenges such as mercenaries, the circulation and proliferation of weapons, poaching, deforestation, piracy and conflicts related to environmental degradation.

Although it is true that the collective commitment and determination of the member States of the Lake Chad Basin Commission have led, within the framework of the Multinational Joint Task Force, to the military defeat of the terrorist group Boko Haram, the group clearly remains capable of causing harm. The Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) member countries are working just as hard to deal with other terrorist groups operating in this area with their support base in southern Libya.

The fight against terrorism continues with determination from our States, some of the poorest in the world, within the framework of both the Multinational Joint Task Force and the G-5 Sahel. Such work is conducted on behalf and in the interest of all our States and therefore deserves the full attention and support of the international community, more so through action than through statements and promises often left unfulfilled.

Peace and security are essential for long-term progress and sustainable development. The stability of a region has far-reaching benefits for neighbouring

regions and beyond, which gives rise to the need for a comprehensive approach and coherent and coordinated collective action to address the root causes of terrorism and conflict, including poverty, ignorance and underdevelopment.

In this regard, I firmly reiterate the call made by the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel member countries at their summit held on 6 February in Niamey, the Niger, asking the members of the Security Council to place the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, whose purpose is to fight the threat of terrorism, under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, in order to secure its sustainable funding and a mandate commensurate with the scope of this international threat. The operationalization and increased power and effectiveness of the Force depend largely and fundamentally on the mobilization of resources dedicated to this cause. I would also like to reiterate our sincere thanks to Secretary-General António Guterres for his steadfast commitment, principled positions and advocacy for this legitimate request of the G-5 Sahel.

As Chad advances on the path towards socioeconomic development, which is a guarantee of peace, stability and security, and drawing upon lessons from past and present experiences, my country intends to give priority to our partnerships to achieve concrete results measured in terms of improving the living conditions of our people. In this context, we welcome the ongoing reform of the United Nations Development Support System, which seeks to move away from an assistance-based model to emphasize resilience through sustainable development. We hope that this new approach will take into account the need for regular dialogue, the genuine needs of countries and their priorities when it comes to choosing projects, Government involvement in implementing, monitoring and evaluating projects, and the streamlining of project approval and disbursement procedures.

In the same vein, we welcome the approach of reviewing the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel through the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel. We also stress the need to thoroughly involve the countries concerned in the review process and to take their priorities into account.

Despite multiple security, environmental and socioeconomic challenges, Chad initiated, in 2015, the drafting of two documents on its medium- and long-term development, "Vision 2030: the Chad we want", and its first five-year national development plan 2017-2021, in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Government's approval of these two documents in July 2017 was followed by the presentation of the national development plan at the round table in Paris in September 2017. I would like to take this opportunity to make, on behalf of my Government, a heartfelt call to all our partners to fulfil the pledges announced at the round table. Keeping these promises is vital for Chad.

The Government of the Republic of Chad, well aware of the prominent role played by women in the country's development process, is tackling the gender issue as an essential component of and a key priority in the formulation and implementation of public policies. For this purpose, through a law adopted on 22 May, His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic and Head of State, made it compulsory for 30 per cent of all civil servant appointments and elective positions to be set aside for women, with the ultimate goal of gradually achieving gender parity. This quota has already shown its effectiveness in its implementation.

In addition, we have taken specific measures to ensure the development of women, including the promotion of girls' education and the adoption of a law prohibiting their early marriage. This law sets the minimum age for marriage at 18 years and provides for a prison term of five to 10 years for those who violate this prohibition.

The Lake Chad Conventional Basin is the place where the dramatic consequences of the combined effect of terrorist attacks and climate change on the vulnerable populations, victims of these two scourges, as well as on the environment, are most visible. We must remember that living around Lake Chad are more than 45 million people of diverse origin who bear the full brunt of the consequences of the drying up of Lake Chad, seriously undermining their livelihoods and drastically limiting their resilience capabilities.

The surface area of the Lake Chad has decreased from 25,000 square kilometres 40 years ago to less than 2,500 square kilometres, and the risk of its disappearance is very real. The efforts of four riparian countries and other members of the Lake Chad Basin Commission aimed at saving it are far from adequate to respond to the enormity of the task alone. The gradual disappearance of Lake Chad constitutes a major ecological disaster with serious consequences for food

security and stability in the Sahel, as evidenced by the scarcity of natural resources and the development of the terrorist threat. That is why the international community as a whole must mobilize to lobby to save Lake Chad by supporting the joint initiative of UNESCO and the Lake Chad Basin Commission to register Lake Chad as a biosphere reservation and a World Heritage Site.

The international community is capable of achieving and must help to achieve this noble goal, which is perfectly aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this regard, Chad once again urges all parties to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to fulfil their commitments.

Migration management remains one of the greatest challenges of our time. Thousands of African migrants, driven by desperation, are constantly trying to reach Europe and risking their lives in the process. The flow of migrants will not cease so long as the root causes of migration persist, including poverty, underdevelopment, conflict and lack of opportunity for African young people. In addition to this are factors such as demographic pressure and the adverse effects of climate change, further accentuating the vulnerability of African societies. In the absence of appropriate sustainable migration management mechanisms that take into account the root causes of the phenomenon, we will never be able to put an end to the tragedy of thousands of people dying at sea or in the desert or to scenes from another era, such as that of African migrants being sold at auction as slaves.

In that regard, we must all make a significant effort to promote economic and social development in the countries of origin and transit of migrants in order to stabilize the situation. Improving our cooperation with those countries is the best way to curb illegal migration. Similarly, urgent measures must be taken to help those currently trapped in transit camps or caught in situations of slavery or various violence. We must collectively call on States where migrants are subjected to such violence to respect their basic rights and to bring their migration management methods in line with the rule of law. The best way for all of us to address migration challenges is to put in place flexible mechanisms for legal migration and to consider these phenomena, which have existed since time immemorial, as a means of bringing people closer together and not as a threat.

At the continental and international levels, Chad, while remaining concerned about the persistence of conflict zones here and there, welcomes the progress made in some countries. In the Central African Republic, Chad welcomes the commitment of the Central African authorities and the 14 armed groups to entering the path of dialogue under the auspices of the Panel of Facilitators of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. Chad reaffirms its support for the African Initiative, which is led by the African Union and supported by the entire international community. The restoration of trust and the beginning of true reconciliation are within the reach of the brotherly Central African people. We call on all bilateral and multilateral partners to provide the necessary resources for the implementation of the African Initiative.

In Mali, Chad welcomes the successful holding of peaceful presidential elections and reiterates its congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita on his decisive re-election, which reflects the commitment of the Malian people to the ongoing political process and peace. Chad encourages all Malian stakeholders to fully implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, and reaffirms its commitment to supporting Mali in its stabilization phase.

In South Sudan, Chad welcomes the peace agreement recently signed in Addis Ababa by South Sudanese actors and congratulates the Intergovernmental Authority on Development on the fruits of its tireless efforts. Chad urges all parties to the agreement to implement it in good faith.

Chad also welcomes the very positive developments in the Horn of Africa, characterized by the rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as that between Eritrea and Djibouti, and hopes to see these processes continue.

In Libya, Chad calls on all Libyan parties to give priority to dialogue and reconciliation over armed conflict. We encourage them to use their goodwill and common sense to turn the page on violence. In this regard, the international community must facilitate dialogue and inclusive reconciliation as an immediate priority with a view to restoring peace and ultimately holding credible, transparent and peaceful elections. It should be recalled that the Libyan crisis has serious security consequences for neighbouring countries, including

Chad, as a result of the chaos in southern Libya, which is a lawless area that serves as a haven for terrorist groups, mercenary gangs and all kinds of traffickers. In this regard, we invite all our partners to support the efforts undertaken by Libya, the Niger, the Sudan and Chad within the framework of the agreement signed on 31 May in N'Djamena among the four countries, with a view to securing their common borders.

In Yemen, Chad reaffirms its support for United Nations efforts to promote a political solution to the crisis and urges the Yemeni actors concerned to give priority to dialogue and comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

In Syria, Chad reiterates its support for United Nations mediation efforts and calls on the parties to the conflict to put an end to the suffering they have inflicted on their people for more than seven years by ending the violence and committing themselves resolutely to dialogue and reconciliation. Chad calls on the belligerents to respect international humanitarian law and to facilitate the delivery of aid to civilians.

With regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Chad reiterates its commitment to a two-State solution with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace, stability and security within the June 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine.

With regard to Cuba, Chad notes with concern the deterioration of that country's relations with the United States and encourages both sides to continue the process of normalizing their relations. Chad reiterates its call for the lifting of the embargo imposed on Cuba.

I cannot conclude my remarks without addressing the issue of United Nations reform, namely, Security Council reform, which remains a major ongoing concern for Africa. Chad stresses the urgent need to redress the injustice done to Africa by accelerating the long-awaited reform to reflect the realities of today's world in the United Nations system. The African common position on this point deserves to be taken into account by all States Members of the United Nations if we genuinely want to involve Africa in global governance. Like it or not, the Africa of the twenty-first century is indispensable, and its voice must be heard by the rest of the world.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mamadi Touré, Minister for Foreign Affairs and for Guineans Abroad of the Republic of Guinea.

Mr. Touré (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, on behalf of the President, the Government and the people of the Republic of Guinea, I would like to convey our sincere condolences on the death of Mr. Kofi Annan, a great son of Africa and former Secretary-General of the United Nations, who dedicated his life to promoting peace, international humanitarian law and multilateralism.

My delegation would like to congratulate the President on her election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-third session and to assure her of its support for the success of her term. Guinea would like to pay a well-deserved tribute to her predecessor, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, for his inclusive presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, during a crucial period of reform of our Organization.

My delegation also warmly congratulates Secretary-General António Guterres on his vision and the commendable efforts he has taken to give a new impetus to the United Nations, which is beset by political, economic and social challenges in an ever-changing international context. It is clear that, in addressing those challenges, we must give priority to new, more pragmatic, effective and coordinated approaches to achieving the objectives set out in the Charter of the United Nations.

The seventy-third session, under this year's theme of "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", calls on us to urgently strengthen the global leadership of the United Nations with respect to the requirements of reform and the aspirations contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We must recall that the United Nations was created in the aftermath of one of humankind's most devastating wars, suffered the stigma of the Cold War and was shaken by the turbulences linked to the end of that same Cold War. However, it has resisted all attempts to weaken it by making it ineffective at managing certain crises that threaten peace and stability throughout the world.

In an increasingly interdependent world, the United Nations is the only multilateral platform capable of adopting a global and concerted approach in seeking solutions to the many challenges it faces. During a period of deep crisis for the Organization, Secretary-General Kofi Annan recalled the following:

> "[A] group of far-sighted leaders... saw that the human race had only one world to live in, and that unless it managed its affairs prudently, all human beings might perish. So they drew up rules to govern international behaviour and founded a network of institutions, with the United Nations at its centre, in which the peoples of the world could work together for the common good." (*A/58/PV.7, p.3*)

Today, the purposes and principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations remain more relevant than ever. The universality of the United Nations in maintaining international peace, security and prosperity in the world is confirmed on a daily basis. The multiple fields of action make it possible to assist Member States in their development processes. That is why we must remain determined and resolutely committed to implementing the reforms that are crucial for our Organization.

The Republic of Guinea supports that ongoing reform process, initiated by Secretary-General, in particular in the pillars of peace, security and sustainable development. Guinea cannot insist enough on the need for Security Council reform. It is time to take into account Africa's demographic, political and economic importance in order to give it the role it can and must play on the international stage and to redress the injustice the continent has suffered by granting it two permanent seats and as many non-permanent seats. The results of the reform must ultimately lead to the establishment of a fair and equitable system of international cooperation based on solidarity and shared responsibility.

The seventy-third session of the General Assembly coincides this year with the sixtieth anniversary of the Republic of Guinea's independence, on 2 October 1958. In the same year, it joined the Organization as the eighty-second State Member of the United Nations. As we celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of our independence, we will be flying the flag of pan-Africanism. It is clear that the United Nations has been and remains for Guinea a multilateral forum that has enabled it to realize the ideals for it has struggled so much, including its pan-African vision of independence, the fight against apartheid, the promotion of peace and security, and the socioeconomic development of the continent.

Today, under the dynamic leadership of the President of the Republic of Guinea, His Excellency Mr. Alpha Condé, our country has made significant progress in the economic and social fields, which can guarantee a better future for the people of Guinea. The megaprojects carried out in the energy and agriculture sectors and the creation of infrastructure that is crucial to development have been welcomed by the Guinean people because they are convinced that those achievements will certainly lead to Guinea's development by 2040.

Based on the priorities of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 2063 Agenda of the African Union, Guinea has focused on the ownership and implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In this context, our country, at the third High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, presented its first voluntary national review — for 2018 — on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. That was a timely opportunity for my country to share with other Member States its experience in the process of implementing its sustainable development programme by 2040.

The Government's determination to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals was supported by the 2016-2020 national economic and social development plan, guided by the forward-looking "Guinea Vision 2040" plan, which aims to make development planning the appropriate instrument for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In this regard, Guinea is counting on the support of the United Nations and other partners.

The Government strongly appreciates the new climate of dialogue for the promotion of sustainable peace in Africa, as peace and security are essential conditions for inclusive development. The tangible progress achieved in the strategic partnerships between the United Nations and African peace missions, as well as the significant progress in crisis management in Guinea-Bissau, South Sudan, Somalia and in the disputes between Ethiopia and Eritrea and between Eritrea and Djibouti, confirm once again the need to continue to focus on political solutions to create a peaceful environment conducive to development.

We are convinced that substantial investments in conflict prevention and the quest for political solutions will save humankind countless lives and the destruction of infrastructure. However, these positive developments that have been made here and there should not distract us from our common struggle against international terrorism and violent extremism. That is

why my delegation strongly condemns the barbaric acts committed against innocent people in Africa and throughout the world. It urges the major Powers to support Africa in its fight against these scourges and to support the Group of Five for the Sahel in confronting the atrocities committed by terrorist groups so as to restore lasting peace in the Sahel region.

Guinea welcomes the implementation of the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel, entitled "Sahel, Land of Opportunities", which targets 10 countries, including Guinea. The plan focuses on six key areas: cross-border cooperation, prevention, peacekeeping, inclusive growth, climate and renewable energy. Partnerships with Member States, regional economic communities, civil society and donors will facilitate the implementation of various development projects, help to fight extreme poverty, improve the humanitarian situation, strengthen resilience to change and reduce the scourge of food insecurity.

If there is another situation where the role of the United Nations remains indisputable, it is the conflict in the Middle East, which remains a major concern for the international community. Guinea has always unambiguously expressed its unconditional solidarity with the just cause of the Palestinian people. We remain convinced that any viable and sustainable solution in the Middle East necessarily means respecting and implementing the relevant Security Council resolutions that call for the creation of two States living side by side in security and within safe and internationally recognized borders.

Conflicts — in particular protracted crises — environmental degradation and human rights violations continue to increase humanitarian needs, which are currently estimated at nearly $22.5 billion. However, the mobilization of funds is hampered not only by a lack of solidarity but also the drastic cuts to the United Nations budget. That is why the management of generated funds must be transparent and inclusive.

Of all the humanitarian challenges, the issue of human mobility is the most consequential for us and therefore requires greater solidarity and the sharing of responsibilities. That is why we welcome the advent of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, which is a source of hope for more than 258 million international migrants, composed largely of women and children. This important document, which the Republic of Guinea will adopt in December in Marrakech, will strike a balance between State sovereignty and fundamental rights. The compact is fundamentally aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, while providing an important monitoring mechanism.

The achievement of social well-being through the Sustainable Development Goals can be made possible only if we succeed in ridding our world of recurring diseases. It is therefore important to strengthen our solidarity in the fight against communicable and non-communicable diseases, which continue to decimate a large part of the world's population. My delegation welcomes the steps taken and the progress made in effectively eradicating tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and other diseases. We wholeheartedly support the United Nations project for universal health coverage.

The creation of an inclusive society underpins the elimination of inequalities and social barriers that prevent the participation of young people and women in economic and political activities. Gender equality and the promotion and empowerment of young people and women are fundamental to achieving sustainable development and must be taken into account in development policies.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary-General, who has been working since his inauguration for the achievement of parity through appointments to the higher bodies of the United Nations. We have a responsibility to perpetuate that good practice within the United Nations and other international and national institutions, as it is in line with the agreements on gender and women's rights.

I would like to conclude by emphasizing that the United Nations remains the only institution that can maintain global balance and ensure our collective security and shared prosperity. Any withdrawal into ourselves would be detrimental to peace and stability around the world. Multilateralism therefore remains the only way forward to effectively achieve the goals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Siala, Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the State of Libya.

Mr. Siala (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): As His Excellency President Faiez Serraj is unable to attend the general debate at this year's session of the General

Assembly due to the latest developments in Tripoli, he has asked me to deliver the following statement on his behalf:

"At the outset, allow me, Sir, to congratulate, through you, Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I would like to wish her every success and assure her of our full cooperation as she works to realize the goals of this session. I also thank her predecessor Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for the efforts he made as President of the General Assembly during the seventy-second session. In addition, I would like to commend Secretary-General António Guterres for the efforts he has made to fulfil the purposes and objectives of the United Nations.

"Undoubtedly, the situation of my country, Libya, continues to draw the attention of the United Nations and the international community as a whole and still requires monitoring. We appreciate and respect all those who have made sincere efforts to help us overcome the difficult circumstances in which we find ourself and the challenges we are facing. We underscore the need to coordinate and integrate these efforts and to avoid rivalries or divergences when initiatives are launched, because failure to do so diminishes our capacity to respond to the crisis. We believe that, before holding any regional or international meeting on the Libyan issue, it is important that there be coordination with the United Nations so as to ensure that the outcome is compatible with the United Nations vision for the resolution of the Libyan crisis.

"Since its establishment, the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya has recognized the scope of the challenges that the country is facing, namely, the upsurge in terrorism, political divergences, security instability and an exacerbated economic crisis, all of which has had an impact on the delivery of the necessary basic services and therefore on the lives of Libyans themselves. We remain committed to finding expeditious solutions to these challenges. Last year, we proposed a road map for overcoming the crisis based on holding presidential and parliamentary elections, putting an end to all fighting except the fight against terrorism, and providing the necessary conditions for national reconciliation. In our view, this approach would unify national institutions and allow us to create a modern democratic State. However, even though the relevant national institutions have not shown any reciprocity, we nevertheless remain hopeful, reaching out to all with determination and sincere initiatives, with a view to breaking the political deadlock that has brought such frustration to the people of Libya and the State alike.

"We highly commend the ongoing efforts of Mr. Ghassan Salamé, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya, and his team, aimed at bringing together the points of view of the Libyan parties and seeking solutions to the wide range of issues and challenges we are facing. In this regard, I would recall that the Government of National Accord welcomed the road map proposed by Mr. Salamé at the high-level meeting on Libya in September 2017. The Government encouraged all relevant parties to show flexibility so that consensus on amendments related to certain controversial items in the Political Agreement could be quickly reached, thereby creating momentum towards implementing the remaining steps of the plan. Unfortunately, no progress has been made.

"The Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord supports any path leading to a comprehensive political solution, which is why we have engaged in dialogue with those calling for general elections as a way out of the political crisis. We have facilitated the High National Electoral Commission's efforts to register voters, and the results have been very encouraging. The number of voters registered has been unprecedented, surpassing our expectations and reflecting the desire of Libyans to have elections held. We have also allocated 60 million Libyan dinars to the Commission in order to prepare for the elections. We have worked with the relevant parties to ensure the security conditions needed for elections to be held in complete freedom and integrity. We hope that this expression of the will of the people will be acted upon by the relevant institutions, which must commit to seeing that the country's interests prevail, to making all necessary legislative and legal arrangements to end the political stalemate and to bringing all State institutions together to resolve the various problems being faced by the Libyan people.

"We underscore our determination to continue making efforts to get the country out of its crises. We will strongly oppose all who attempt to impose their will through the use of weapons. We have condemned the military attacks that took place in the suburbs of Tripoli city a few weeks ago, which led to gross material damage and loss of human lives, terrorizing women and children and forcibly displacing innocent civilians. .

"We highly appreciate the efforts of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), under the leadership of Mr. Ghassan Salamé, to bring about a ceasefire agreement, and we call on all relevant parties to respect that ceasefire. I give my word that the national and international judicial bodies will be seized with the prosecution of the perpetrators of attacks for the suffering they caused.

"We are also determined to take the security measures needed to unify the country's military and security institutions and establish security and peace in Libya, as stipulated by the Political Agreement. We wish to underline once again that the use or threat of use of weapons only benefits terrorists who, amid the chaos, find opportunities to carry out their criminal acts. We saw this in the terrorist attacks in Tripoli that targeted the High National Electoral Commission and the national oil company. Accordingly, priority must be given to security and stability as an indispensable goal and urgent step that also requires active support from the United Nations. We therefore believe that it is important to convert UNSMIL from a special political mission to a mission whose purpose is to establish and support security and stability throughout the country.

"The Government of National Accord is striving to find solutions to the difficult living conditions and lack of services that Libyans are facing. It has launched economic reforms to facilitate and improve the living conditions of our citizens and to enhance the performance of a hitherto unstable service sector. In this regard, we attach particular importance to mobilizing financial resources to respond to the needs of our people. We call on all States holding Libyan assets or funds to make the necessary arrangements for the Presidency Council to be able to cover the costs of policies and programmes designed to help all Libyans.

"My country reiterates its absolute condemnation and rejection of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, regardless of its origin, perpetrators or motives. We underscore that terrorism is a global phenomenon that should not be linked to any religion or doctrine. As the Assembly is aware, my country has made enormous sacrifices to eradicate terrorist organizations with foreign fighters in their ranks, including Da'esh, which was exported to us from abroad. Not only does Da'esh threaten the security and stability of Libya, but it also exploits our natural resources for its own benefit as it carries out its bloodthirsty agenda — one, I would add, that has no link to Islam. Libya has ratified all international conventions related to the fight against terrorism and considers the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and its four pillars one of the most important international legal frameworks to guide national legislation in fighting the phenomenon of terrorism.

"The dangers posed by terrorist networks remain in Libya, requiring us to be vigilant and to strengthen joint coordination at all levels as well as regional and international cooperation so that terrorists can be tracked down and eliminated wherever they are. It is also important that regional and subregional plans and programmes, including, for example, the outcomes of ministerial meetings on bolstering cooperation in the field of security and joint monitoring of borders, continue to receive support. The most recent meeting on this topic was held in the Sudanese capital, with the participation of the Sudan, the Niger, Chad and Libya, resulting in a joint action plan to implement the agreement that had been previously concluded in N'Djamena by those four States. We hope that this action plan will receive support from the international community. We have expressed our support for all international efforts aimed at fighting terrorism and underscored on many occasions our support for calls for holding an international high-level conference under the auspices of the United Nations on ways to unify efforts in that regard.

"With respect to human rights, we emphasize our determination to uphold and protect them. As proof of our commitment in that domain, we have adopted several laws, including those on establishing political parties, legalizing peaceful demonstrations, criminalizing torture and enforced

disappearances, amending the penal code and codifying transitional justice. This legislation, which will soon enter into force, is designed to promote tolerance and harmony among members of our national community.

"With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, the Government of National Accord has continually sought to promote women's rights and gender equality, while providing free and ongoing educational services and medical care to all citizens. Pursuant to article 7 of the Constitutional Declaration, which calls for joining all international and regional conventions and charters related to strengthening human rights, we have ratified some of those conventions, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which Libya is now a party.

"We once again wish to reiterate our commitment to protecting and upholding human rights. However, we note that current difficulties in the transitional period have given rise to certain security challenges that have led to human rights violations. In this regard, we look forward to benefiting from technical assistance mechanisms from the Human Rights Council and other programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations.

"My country pays great attention to the issue of illegal migration. We seek to address the ongoing flow of migrants being exploited by human trafficking networks, thousands of whom have perished at sea. This kind of migration is causing human suffering that the international community has been unable to address until now. Libya is a transit country that is facing serious economic, social and security consequences as a result of the migration phenomenon; indeed, the migration issue has clearly exacerbated the state of insecurity in Libya, causing many difficulties and problems across Libyan society. It is difficult to limit the repercussions of the phenomenon without foreign cooperation and assistance commensurate with the scope of these challenges and their consequences. Clearly, the optimal solution does not lie in dealing with it merely as a problem of security. We need to focus on the real underlying causes that push people to seek the daunting path of migration.

"Accordingly, we welcome the efforts undertaken to reach an international agreement for safe, orderly and regular migration, to be adopted at the intergovernmental conference to be held in Marrakech, Kingdom of Morocco, in December. Nevertheless, we would have liked to see the draft agreement deal with this issue in a broader manner. We agree on the need to protect the rights of migrants as much as possible. However, the current and increasing flow of migrants excessively burdens national potentials and capabilities to such an extent that migrants' rights can rarely be guaranteed.

"I firmly believe that the international community should support countries of origin and encourage them to develop and implement effective development programmes and projects, thereby enhancing their productive and services sectors, so that poverty, unemployment and other forms of deprivation fall away and people can stop thinking of irregular and dangerous emigration as a solution.

"My country pays great attention to issues of disarmament and the maintenance of international peace and security. It actively participates in the deliberations in various forums on those issues and actively supports many decisions taken by the United Nations in the field. We fully endorse the relevant international treaties and conventions, cognizant of the fact that producing and stockpiling weapons of mass destruction is a threat to international peace and security, which horrifies all members of the human race.

"Moreover, Libya has participated in international disarmament efforts related to weapons of mass destruction and the maintenance of international peace and security. In this regard, I would like to recall that after joining the Chemical Weapons Convention, my country promptly addressed its chemical stock, in cooperation and coordination with the secretariat of the Convention and its international partners, which eventually led us to destroying our chemical stocks.

"We reaffirm our support for international efforts aimed at establishing nuclear-weapon free zones. We stress that the Middle East region as a whole should be free of weapons of mass destruction and that all countries in the region should declare that they possess such weapons or have the intention

to do so. All countries in the region must also join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

"At the same time, we would like to underscore the right of States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. States that have abandoned weapons of mass destruction should be supported and encouraged to train people in the area of the peaceful use of nuclear energy so that they might acquire the necessary technical knowledge to pursue such uses.

"Three years have elapsed since the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is focused on 17 ambitious goals, was adopted by the Heads of State and Government. We in Libya are facing many challenges in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), mostly due to political and security instability. The Assembly is aware that development is closely linked to security; indeed, as is well known, there is no development without security and no security without development. We look forward to moving past these difficulties and to launching development plans and programmes to improve our economy and start focusing on attaining the SDGs.

"The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development stress the need of countries to mobilize financial resources to achieve their development goals. My country, Libya, is one of the countries whose funds have been transferred abroad. We therefore call on States holding our funds to disclose that fact and help us recover them so that we can begin to implement the Sustainable Development Goals in a serious manner.

"Accordingly, we would like to recall the frozen Libyan funds and assets of the Libyan sovereign wealth fund, which is incurring losses as a result of the sanctions imposed by the many Security Council resolutions adopted since 2011. We underscore that the purpose of those sanctions was to preserve Libyan funds and assets, rather than deplete them. However, the assets freeze has caused those funds and assets to incur enormous ongoing losses. Since March 2016, we have provided the Security Council and the relevant sanctions committee with clear information about our losses, and have appealed to them to amend the current sanctions regime so that we can put a stop to these huge losses. Unfortunately, we have not seen any action taken in response to our justified requests. If nothing changes, the wasting of frozen Libyan resources would in essence deprive Libyans of funds that could be invested in their future.

"My delegation supports the Secretary-General's proposed reforms of certain United Nations bodies, and we hope that these reforms lead us to fulfilling the commitments set forth in the 2005 World Summit Outcome, namely, to consolidate the authority of the Organization and ensure its effectiveness and ability to properly address all current challenges. Despite the progress that has been made elsewhere, the Security Council, the most important organ in the Organization, has yet to implement any reform. It is therefore crucial that the Security Council, which no longer reflects the realities of the world of the twenty-first century, undertake genuine reform.

"In the face of the serious challenges threatening international peace and security, the current geopolitical situation calls for a reform process that results in equitable representation in the Council. We call for an end to the historical injustice suffered by the African continent with regard to its unfair representation in the permanent and non-permanent categories of Security Council membership. We underline the African demand contained in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, namely, two permanent seats with all rights and powers, including the right to veto, and two non-permanent seats. This demand is in line with the requirements of justice and the right of the African continent to effectively participate in the decisions made by the Council, particularly in the light of the fact that many such decisions are on African issues. The African demand reflects the right of the continent to a minimum of fair representation in the Council and offsets the marginalization and historical injustice that Africa has suffered. Accordingly, we also support the demand by the Group of Arab States to be granted a permanent seat on the Council.

"Peace in the Middle East will not be achieved as long as the occupying Power continues to shed the blood of innocent Palestinians, confiscate their land, build settlements, impose an unjust siege on the Palestinian people, seek by any means to Judaize Jerusalem, and flout all relevant

international resolutions. We join the Palestinian people in rejecting the announcement by the occupying Power that Israel is a Jewish nation State. This announcement risks triggering dangerous escalation and improperly resolving the Palestinian question by removing native Palestinians from their ancestral lands and allowing them to be replaced by Jewish settlers. Such practices have been soundly rejected as racist.

"Furthermore, we reject attempts to change the legal status of occupied Jerusalem, including attempts by certain States to use a policy of fait accompli, for example by transferring their embassies in Israel to the city of Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel. These attempts violate relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

"We underscore our support for the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination and to the establishment of a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. We call for the protection of the Palestinian people and demand that the occupying Power cease all acts of violence, terrorism, settlements and repeated attacks against them.

"Not far from occupied Palestine, in some regions of Syria, the brotherly Syrian people have been facing disastrous humanitarian situations for years as a result of a destructive conflict that has caused immense human and material damage and led to the displacement of many innocent people. We condemn all brutal terrorist acts committed against the Syrian people and support all international efforts aimed at finding a peaceful solution that would avoid dismantling and partitioning the country. We also support international efforts aimed at fulfilling the aspirations of the Syrian people to live a decent life in a democratic country governed by the rule of law, where human rights are maintained and respected.

"With regard to our brotherly country Yemen, we express deep concern at the disastrous humanitarian situation unfolding there. We have spoken out against the continuing conflict that is clearly threatening the security, stability and unity of Yemeni society, as well as the security of the region as a whole. In this context, we support all efforts aimed at stopping the bloodshed in Yemen and at alleviating the suffering of the brotherly Yemeni people.

"In conclusion, I would like to stress that today's challenges, whether they be security, economic, social or other types of challenge, require that we all work together to strengthen the role of the United Nations so that it can adapt to developments in the international arena and resolve conflicts and crises through peaceful means."

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

Several speakers have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Al-Khalifa (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Qatari delegation has requested the floor to speak in exercise of the right of reply following the statement by the representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in which he made false and unacceptable accusations against my country. More than a year after the unjust embargo was imposed on Qatar, we can assert that it failed to achieve its goals. However, the Saudi accusations, intended to undermine the reputation of my country, are nothing new.

As has been clearly shown, Qatar has always cooperated with the international community. Indeed, we have made efforts to fight terrorism by cutting off the flow of resources to it, combat radicalism and achieve sustainable peace. The Saudi accusations are not worthy of a response. However, it should be said that when a party repeats the same accusations over and over without providing any factual evidence, that party's credibility is severely undermined.

As we have said in many forums, as a first step in combating the phenomenon of terrorism, we should pay close attention to its sources. It is well known that terrorism has always been rooted in the type of religious radicalization advocated by Saudi Arabia to promote its own political interests. It is ironic that, from one day to the next, radicalization rooted in religious ideology can be suppressed and substituted with a disingenuously civilized call made on the world stage. We see activists, religious moderates and those calling for reform — particularly women — being put into Saudi

jails without fair trials, in violation of international law, as the whole world watches. Saudi Arabia's goal is to politicize terrorism, and it will make accusations of terrorism against all who disagree with its policies, including against sovereign States. The State of Qatar is not the only victim; other countries have also borne the brunt of Saudi Arabia's crude methods.

The State of Qatar has shown wisdom and restraint in responding to a fabricated crisis. We have used everything at our disposal to try to alleviate the suffering caused by an unjust embargo. There were, however, humanitarian consequences resulting from coercive and illegal measures that affected property rights and access to justice that cannot be redressed without reparations to Qatari citizens and non-citizens whose rights were violated, to families whose members were separated and to students who were unable to complete their studies.

I would also like to mention the worst measures: Qatari citizens and non-citizens residing in the State of Qatar were barred under fake pretexts for the second consecutive year from fulfilling their Hajj and Umrah religious duties. This prohibition was widely condemned because it is a grave human rights violation and an unprecedented politicization of religious issues.

Despite the unilateral measures that denied Qataris many of their rights, amply documented in international reports, the Government of the State of Qatar has abstained from taking retaliatory measures against the brotherly Saudi people. Moreover, we will continue our constructive partnerships with the United Nations and countries across the world in order to achieve tangible results that strengthen security and sustained peace, alleviate human suffering, promote human rights and enhance the quality of relationships among countries and peoples.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): My delegation takes the floor to exercise Indonesia's right of reply in order to respond to the statement made by the representative of Vanuatu (see A/73/PV.12). Indonesia condemns the slander and baseless comments that the delegation of Vanuatu made in its statement this morning when referring to the Indonesian provinces of Papua and West Papua. Not only do these accusations undermine the sanctity of friendly relations among nations and the principle of non-interference, but they also violate the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

For many years, Vanuatu has tried to spread several fraudulent ideas — that there are flagrant, systematic and widespread human rights violations in Indonesia; that Indonesia neglects civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights; and that the people in the provinces of Papua and West Papua are racially different and therefore do not belong in Indonesia. Vanuatu argues that, based on these factors, which have been injected into their minds by criminal individuals, the two provinces should be the subject of debate at the United Nations.

We fail to understand the motive behind Vanuatu's intentions in supporting a group of people who have wrought terror and mayhem on so many occasions, causing fatalities and sorrow for innocent families in their own communities. Indonesia categorically rejects any efforts to disturb the peace, stability and growth enjoyed by the people of Papua and West Papua, and would like to state the following points.

First, accusing Indonesia of committing gross violations of human rights and inhuman acts is serious and unacceptable. No country in the world is free from human rights or development challenges, but accusing others of human rights violations when one has so many problems of one's own is the pot calling the kettle black. Vanuatu, which portrays itself as a champion of human rights, is party to only a few of the international human rights instruments, while Indonesia, on the other hand, is party to eight out of the nine instruments. Interestingly, Vanuatu has not ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, whereas Indonesia did so a long time ago.

Indonesia is a diverse and multicultural nation comprising hundreds of ethnic groups, thousands of tribes and hundreds of local languages. We define ourselves neither on the basis of racial purity nor as a single ethnic group. We reject racial discrimination in Indonesia. If we were to follow the irresponsible premise and logic of Vanuatu, then the world would consist of tens of thousands of countries, given the multitude of races and ethnicities in the world. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to remind Vanuatu that the customary international law deriving from the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States of 1933 clearly stipulates four elements that define a country, namely, population, territory, government and capacity to enter relations with other States. I emphatically state that neither ethnicity nor

race has been stated as an underlying reason for the right to be a country.

Secondly, let me provide Vanuatu with a short lesson on our history. Almost 50 years ago, through resolution 2504 (XXIV), adopted in this very same forum and in this very same Hall, all of us at the United Nations decided on the final status of Papua as a rightful and legitimate part of Indonesia. The resolution, which recognized the successful implementation of the act of free choice, was adopted with no single country voting against it. The people of Papua reaffirmed their place and unity with Indonesia. In other words, what Vanuatu is putting forward is nothing more than an outrageous challenge to a decision of the United Nations — a decision of the then 128 States Members of the United Nations almost half a century ago.

Indonesia, like every other responsible member of the United Nations, vigorously upholds the principles of the Charter. For that reason, Vanuatu's support for individuals whose separatist agendas seek to challenge Indonesia are an undeniable violation of the principles of the Charter and must therefore be denounced. Furthermore, it is a shame that, since last year, Vanuatu has appointed those very individuals to serve as official members of its delegation. Such actions are tantamount to acts of hostility and have no place — none at all — in the United Nations system.

A country that supports separatists and the dismemberment of another country should not participate at a gathering of a decent, law-abiding family of nations. Enough is enough. We could not care less what Vanuatu's motives are, but what we know for sure is that Indonesia will firmly and strongly defend its sovereignty, its territorial integrity and its dignity. Let that be known.

Ms. Danish (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of my country, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, entirely rejects and condemns the statement delivered by the representative of Qatar.

In the two decades since the mid-1990s, Qatar has incited peoples and supported extremists. As the headquarters for the Muslim Brotherhood, Qatar has been instrumental in the creation of other such groups as the Takfir wal-Hijra group, Al-Qaida and Jabhat Al-Nusrah. It has also allowed religious extremist leaders to appear in their television broadcasts to justify suicide attacks. Qatar has a history of harbouring terrorist groups; indeed, one Al-Qaida leader succeeded in entering the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia using a Qatari passport, while other Al-Qaida members were arrested by Saudi authorities when they tried to enter our territory using Qatari passports. Qatar is well aware of these actions, as is the United States.

Qatar has also supported separatists in my country, as well as in the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Kuwait, in attempts to fabricate crises to undermine those countries' Governments in order to destabilize the region. The one that should be accused of harbouring and supporting terrorism is not the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, but Qatar, for it is Qatar that is financing and supporting terrorism.

Qatar's accusations against the Government of my country with respect to barring Qatari pilgrims are false. The Ministry of Hajj welcomes our Qatari pilgrim brethren who wish to perform Hajj and Umrah after they have completed the required procedures upon arrival at King Abdul Aziz International Airport in Jeddah. Just like pilgrims from all other countries, Qataris must provide personal data, register with the Hajj Ministry's website and sign contracts with Saudi companies authorized to provide services to pilgrims. There are various packages available from which pilgrims can choose according to what suits them. The only restriction is that they must arrive by air at the King Abdul Aziz International Airport in Jeddah using any airline other than Qatar Airways.

Mr. Al-Khalifa (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): On 5 June 2017, Saudi Arabia attempted an act of aggression against the sovereignty of the State of Qatar through an unjust embargo and other illegal measures proscribed under international law and international norms. The State of Qatar has also been subject to a misleading and cheap campaign of abuse by the Saudi press and social media consisting of clearly fabricated false accusations. Nevertheless, it is strange and regrettable that this slander has found its way into the general debate of the General Assembly, where Heads of State and Government are supposed to discuss how to improve relations and promote international cooperation among States with a view to addressing common challenges.

I would like to reiterate that the State of Qatar is boldly advancing in all areas of development so as to serve our people, bring them prosperity and contribute to attaining peace and security in the Middle East region and throughout the world. We continue to wage the fight against terrorism, while working to strengthen

human rights. We strive to promote stability, peace and security in our region and to maintain our crucial regional arrangements, despite the efforts of others to impose blockade policies against us.

As this is my second statement in exercise of the right of reply, in accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I will not be able to take the floor again to respond to the foregoing or any further allegations. My country therefore reserves the right to respond to these allegations in writing.

The meeting rose at 10.30 p.m.